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HE HELD THE AX READY TO STRIKE THE FIRST ATTACKING ANIMAL. (*See page 189.*)

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A Tale of Adventure Down North

By

DILLON WALLACE

Author of "Troop One of the Labrador," "The Testing of Jim MacLean," "The Lure of the Labrador Wild," etc., etc.

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To Her
Whose Never Failing
Loyalty and Devotion
is My Fount of Inspiration
My Wife

This life is not all sunshine,
Nor is it yet all showers;
But storms and calms alternate,
As thorns among the flowers.
And while we seek the roses,
The thorns full oft we scan,
Still let us, though they wound us,
Be happy as we can.

This life has heavy crosses,
As well as joys to share,
And griefs and disappointments,
Which you and I must bear.
And if we may not follow
The path our hearts would plan,
Let us make all around us
As happy as we can.

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I

THE LOST PASSENGER

CHARLEY NORTON was bored and unhappy. He stood at the starboard rail of the mail boat gazing out at the cold, bleak rocks of the Labrador coast, dimly visible through fitful gusts of driving snow.

Charley Norton and his father's secretary, Hugh Wise, had boarded the ship at St. Johns ten days before for the round trip voyage to Hopedale, and during the voyage there had not been one pleasant day. Biting blasts swept the deck, heralding the winter near at hand, and there was no protecting nook where one could escape them and sit in any degree of comfort. The cabin was close and stuffy, and its atmosphere was heavy with that indescribable odor that rises from the bowels of old ships. The smoking room, bare and dismal and reeking with stale tobacco smoke, was deserted, save when the mail boat doctor and Hugh Wise were oc-

casionally discovered there in a silent game of checkers.

Charley had tried every corner of the ship to which he was admitted, and had decided that, as uncomfortable as it was, he preferred the deck to cabin or smoking room.

It was the middle of October, and the last voyage the mail boat was to make until the end of the following June, when the winter's ice would clear from the coast, and navigation would open for another short summer. The last fishing schooner had already hurried southward to escape the autumn gales and the blockade of ice, and the sea was deserted save by the lonely mail boat, which was picking up the last of the Newfoundlanders' cod fishing gear at the little harbours of the coast.

"A swell time I'm having!" Charley muttered. "Not even a decent place on the old ship where I can sit and read!"

"Not having a good time, eh?"

Charley looked up into the smiling face of Barney MacFarland, the second engineer.

"Hello!" he exclaimed. "I didn't know anybody was around. I didn't hear you."

"Having a rotten time?" Barney grinned good-naturedly.

"The worst I've ever had!" said Charley. "It's too cold to stay on deck and too close and smelly inside, and there's no one to talk with. Mr. Wise sprawls in his bunk reading silly novels he brought with him, when he isn't playing checkers with the Doctor."

"'Tis a bad season to be coming down to The Labrador," suggested Barney. "Though there's fog enough in July and August, we're having fine weather too, with plenty of sunshine. 'Tis then the passengers are with us, with now and again sightseers from the States. And the fishing places are busy, with enough to see. Then's the time to come."

"I didn't pick the time," explained Charley, glad to have an opportunity to talk into sympathetic ears. "Dad was going hunting in Newfoundland, and he took me to St. Johns with him. I thought I was going along, but after we got to St. Johns he said I was too young to hike through the country, and that this trip on the mail boat would be more interesting for me while he hunted. He sent Mr. Wise along to keep me company. He's Dad's secretary. He's left me alone most of the time. Dad said I would see Indians and Eskimos and loads of interesting things, but I've been on the ship ever

since we left, except at Hopedale when the Captain took me ashore for an hour while we were lying there before we turned back. That was dandy! I saw Eskimos, and Eskimo dogs, and I bought some souvenirs at the Moravian Mission for Mother and some of the boys. But I wasn't there half long enough to see everything. They never let me go ashore in the boat at the harbours where we stop."

"Well, well, now! That is hard on you, b'y," agreed Barney sympathetically. "Where is your home?"

"In New York. But Dad is so busy at his office that I don't see him often. I thought I was going to have a dandy time with *him!*"

Charley choked back tears, which he felt it would be unmanly to shed, and gazed out over the sea.

"Lad, when you gets lonesome to talk come down to the engine room when it's my watch on," Barney invited heartily. "I'll show you the big engines, and we'll chum up a bit. I'm off watch now, but I'll be on at eight bells. That's four o'clock, land reckoning. I'll come and get you, b'y, and show you the way."

"Thank you! Thank you ever so much!" Charley acknowledged gratefully, as Barney left him.

The ship which had been standing off from the shore was now edging in toward the land. Suddenly there came a long blast of the whistle. There was activity upon the deck at once. Sailors were swinging a boat out upon the davits. Charley hastened to join the sailors, and asked:

"Are we going to make a port?"

"Aye, lad," answered one of them good-naturedly.

"What place is it?" asked Charley.

"Pinch-In Tickle."

"Will it be a long stop?"

"Now I'm not knowin' how long or how short. We stop inside the Tickle to take on fish and gear. I'm thinkin' 'twill be a half hour's stop, or thereabouts."

"May I go ashore in the boat?"

"Ask the mate. I'm doubtin' there'll be room. The boat comes back with full cargo at this harbour."

Charley turned his inquiry to the mate, who was directing the men.

"No, lad. I'm sorry," he answered, "but there'll be no room for passengers."

It was always that way! Charley left them to return to his old place at the rail. The ship had slowed to half speed, and was already picking her way cautiously into the tickle, where the cliffs, nearly as high as the masthead, were so close on either side that Charley believed he might have touched them with a ten-foot pole.

At the end of two hundred yards the narrow tickle opened up into a beautiful, sheltered harbour. Perched upon the rocks at the north side of the harbour were some rude cabins. Opposite these the ship swung about, the boat was lowered, and manned by four sailors, pulled to the rocks that formed a natural pier for the fishing station.

There was some bitterness in Charles's heart as he watched the retreating boat, and so occupied was he that he failed to observe, until it was quite near, another boat pulling toward the ship. It was a small, dilapidated old boat, with a boy of fourteen or thereabouts at the oars.

Charley leaned over the rail, and with much interest watched the boy make the painter fast to the ladder, and then, like a squirrel, mount the ladder to the deck.

The visitor was dressed much like the

other natives that Charley had seen. An Eskimo adikey, made of white moleskin cloth, with the hood thrown back, served as a coat. His trousers were also of white moleskin, and were tucked into knee-high sealskin boots with moccasined feet. From under a muskrat fur cap appeared a round, smiling face, tanned a dark brown, and a pair of bright, pleasant eyes.

"Hello!" said Charley. "Looking for some one?"

"No," answered the boy, "I'm just pullin' over to look at the ship."

Charley was seized by a sudden impulse, and acted on it instantly.

"Will you take me ashore? The ship will be here for half an hour, and maybe longer. I'll give you a dollar if you'll take me ashore and bring me back."

"And you wants to go I'll pull you ashore," agreed the boy cheerfully. "I'll be goin' down and holdin' the boat up so you can get into she easy."

Without parley he slipped over the side and down the ladder into the boat, which he drew broadside to the ladder and there held it until Charley, who followed, was seated astern.

"Where you wantin' to go now?" asked the boy. "To the boat landin'?"

"Just anywhere ashore," directed Charley. "Let's land over where I can climb that hill and have a look around."

He indicated a low hill midway between the tickle and the cabins, and the boy soon made a landing on a shelving rock, above which the hill rose abruptly. Charley helped him pull the boat to a safe place, and waited while he made the painter fast. Then the two began the ascent of the hill.

"What's your name?" asked Charley.

"Toby Twig," answered the boy.

"My name is Charley Norton, and I'm from New York. I'm taking a cruise in the mail boat."

"I'm wishin' every time I sees she come in that I could be takin' a cruise in she! It must be wonderful fine."

"I don't think it is. It's too cold on deck and too smelly in the cabin. It must get pretty cold here in winter. Where I live we hardly ever have snow until the end of December."

"Aye, it does get wonderful cold," agreed Toby. "'Twill not be long now till the harbour freezes and the sea too."

"Can't you use boats in winter?"

"No, we can't use un much longer now. We cruises with dogs in winter, after the harbour and the sea freezes."

"It must be dreadfully lonesome with no boats coming in."

"I don't find un lonesome. There's aplenty to do. We hunts in winter, and 'tis fine fun."

"Did you ever shoot a wolf?" asked Charley in some awe.

"No, but I sees un. Last winter I sees five wolves, but they keeps too far away to shoot un."

"My, but I'd like to see a wild wolf! Did you ever see a bear?"

"Yes, I sees bears, black and white. Dad killed a black bear last week."

The two had crossed the crest of the hill, as they talked, wholly oblivious of the passage of time, until Toby suggested:

"I'm thinkin' now we'd better be goin' back. The mail boat never bides long here."

"She was to be here half an hour," said Charley, as they retraced their steps. "We haven't been half an hour."

A moment later they reached the top of the hill. Both boys stopped and looked be-

low them and in consternation into the empty harbour.

"She's gone! The ship has gone!" cried Charley in sudden fright.

"She's gone!" echoed Toby. "She's goin' and leavin' you!"

"Oh, catch her! Signal her! Do something!" Charley plead helplessly.

"We can't catch she or signal she! She's too far," and Toby pointed to a long black line of smoke rising above the rocks beyond Pinch-In Tickle, and more than a mile distant.

"What shall I do? Oh, what shall I do?" wailed Charley in wild despair.

What indeed could he do? Here he was, left upon the bleak rocks of the Labrador coast, at the edge of an Arctic winter, a lad of thirteen, a stranger in a strange and desolate land.



"SHE'S GONE! THE SHIP HAS GONE!" CRIED CHARLEY IN SUDDEN FRIGHT.

II

THE TWIGS OF PINCH-IN TICKLE

"YOU'LL be comin' along with me," suggested Toby. "Dad'll be knowin' what to do."

"But the boat has gone! How can I get home?" Charley almost sobbed, quite beside himself with despair and terror.

"Don't be takin' on like that now!" Toby placed his hand soothingly upon Charley's arm. "Dad says a man can get out of most fixes, and he keeps his head and don't get scared. Dad knows. He's wonderful fine about gettin' out of fixes. Dad'll know what to do. He'll be gettin' you out of your fix easy as a swile[1] slips off a rock. You'll see!"

Helpless to do otherwise, Charley submitted, and Toby led him down to the boat, and when Charley was seated astern, and Toby was pulling for the huts, a half mile away, with the strong, sure stroke of an expert boatman, Toby counselled:

"Don't be lettin' yourself get worked up

[1] Seal.

with worry, now. Dad says worry and frettin' never makes a bad job better."

"It's terrible! It's terrible!" exclaimed Charley in agony. "I've been left behind! I've no place to go, and I'll starve and freeze!"

"'Tisn't so bad, now," Toby argued. "You be safe and sound and well. Maybe the mail boat folk'll be missin' you and come back."

"Do you think they will?" asked Charley, ready to grasp at a straw of hope.

"I'm not knowin'," answered Toby cautiously, "but leastways you'll be safe enough."

Toby's assurance gave little comfort to Charley. The snow was now falling so heavily that he could scarcely see the huts perched upon the rocky hillside, and there was no other indication of human life in the great wide, bleak wilderness that surrounded them. The bare rocks, the falling snow, and the sound of the sea beating upon the cliffs beyond Pinch-In Tickle filled his heart with hopelessness and helplessness. As uncomfortable and unhappy as he had been upon the ship, he now thought of it as a haven of refuge and luxury. If it would

only come back for him! Why had he gone ashore! He had dreamed of adventures, but never an adventure like this.

"Here's the landin'."

Toby had drawn the boat alongside a great flat rock that formed a natural wharf. He sprang nimbly out, painter in hand, and while he steadied the boat Charley followed.

Above the landing were three unpainted and dilapidated cabins. Smoke was issuing from a stovepipe that protruded through the roof of the smallest of these, and toward this Toby led the way.

"This is our fishin' place," Toby volunteered. "We fishes here in summer, and lives in the house where you sees the smoke. The other houses belongs to Mr. McClung from Newfoundland. The mail boat were takin' he and three men that fishes with he, and their gear, and they takes Dad's fish, too."

"You stay here, don't you? You'll stay here till the ship comes back for me, won't you?" asked Charley pleadingly.

"We goes up the bay to-morrow marnin' to our tilt, our winter house at Double Up Cove," said Toby, "but I'm thinkin' that if the ship's comin' back she'll be back before

night. Nobody stays out here in winter. 'Tis wonderful cold here when the wind blows down over the hills and in from the sea, with no trees to break un, and 'tis a poor place for huntin', and no wood is handy for the fire."

"What'll I do when you go?" asked Charley in fresh dismay.

"You'll not be stoppin' here *what*ever," assured Toby. "Dad'll know what to do. He'll get you out of *this* fix! Don't you worry now."

Toby opened the door of the cabin, and the two boys entered. A tall, broad-shouldered, bearded man stood by one of the two windows cleaning a gun. A round-faced, plump little woman was at the stove, transferring from a kettle to a large earthen bowl something that filled the room with a most delicious odour, and a girl of twelve years or thereabouts was placing dishes upon the table.

"Dad," said Toby addressing the man, "I brings with me Charley Norton who was a passenger on the mail boat, and while he's ashore the mail boat goes off and leaves he."

"That's a fix now! *That's* a fix to be in! I calls that a mean trick for the mail boat to

be playin'!" He spoke in a big voice that quite suited his size, but which startled Charley, and did not reassure him. "What's to be done about un now? What be *you* thinkin' to do?"

"I don't know. I don't know what to do," answered Charley timidly.

Toby's Dad put down the gun he was cleaning and wiped his hand on a cloth.

"Leastways we'll make the best of un," he said, taking Charley's hand in a bear-like clasp. "Besides bein' Toby's Dad, I'm Skipper Zebulon Twig of Double Up Cove, and this is Mrs. Twig and this is Vi'let, the smartest little maid on The Labrador."

Skipper Zebulon Twig laughed so heartily that Charley forgot his difficulty for a moment, and laughed too, while he shook hands with Mrs. Twig, who had, Charley thought, a nice motherly way, and with Violet, who took his hand shyly.

"Now," said Skipper Zeb, "you're in a fix. You're cast away. The worst fix a man can get in, to my thinkin', is to be cast away on a rock, or on the ice, without grub. But you're cast away *with* grub, and that's not so bad. There's a pot of stewed bear's meat

with dumplin' just ready. We'll set in and eat, and then talk about your fix. 'Tis hard to think a way out of fixes with an empty belly, and we'll fill ours. Then we'll get to the bottom of this fix. We'll find a way out of un. You'll see!"

III

SKIPPER ZEB FIXES MATTERS

MRS. TWIG placed the big earthen bowl with the appetizing odour in the center of the table, together with a plate heaped high with slices of white bread and a bowl of molasses. Then she poured tea.

"Dinner's ready this minute," boomed Skipper Zeb. "Set in, and we'll eat."

There was no cover upon the home-made table, but its top had been scoured clean and white with sand and water. The cabin boasted no chairs, and chests were drawn up by Skipper Zeb and Toby to the ends of the table, and a bench on each side, to serve as seats.

Accepting the invitation, Charley took a place beside Toby on one of the benches, Violet sat on the bench opposite them, while the Skipper and Mrs. Twig each took an end. When all were seated, Skipper Zeb, in so big a voice Charley was sure the Lord could not fail to hear, asked a devout blessing upon the

family, the stranger within their home, and upon the food.

"Turn to, now, and eat hearty," Skipper Zeb invited, indicating the earthen bowl. "'Tisn't much we has, but 'tis good. Mrs. Twig makes the finest dumplin' on The Labrador. I knows for I eats un. I shoots the bear last week, and 'twere as fine and fat a bear as ever I sees. He were just prime to curl up for his winter sleep."

"It looks good, and I'm hungry," said Charley, transferring, with a big serving spoon, a portion of the stewed bear's meat and dumpling to his plate. "I never ate bear's meat, and I've always wished I could."

"Never ate bear's meat!" exclaimed Skipper Zeb. "Well, now! And we gets a bear most every year. What kind of meat does you eat where you comes from? 'Tis likely you gets plenty of deer's meat?"

"Beef, and lamb, and veal, and pork, but I don't care much for pork, except bacon," said Charley.

"Well, now! In all my days I never tastes beef or lamb or veal! We gets pickled pork at the post, and 'tis wonderful fine meat *I* thinks. If beef and lamb and veal be better than pork, I'd like to try un once. *They*

must be a rare treat." Skipper Zeb smacked his lips. "Yes, sir, I'd like to try un once! And does you hunt un?"

"No," Charley smiled, "the animals are raised on farms and the meat is sold at stores."

"Well, now! What wonderful things goes on in the world, and we never knows about un down here on The Labrador." Skipper Zeb shook his head in astonishment. "Does you mark that, Sophia? They raises the animals and then kills un, and sells the meat at the tradin' stores!"

"'Tis a queer way," admitted Mrs. Twig.

"'Tis a fine way!" enthused Skipper Twig. 'Twould be fine if we could raise deer and kill un when we wants un."

"Here's sweetenin' for your tea," and Toby, observing that Charley had not helped himself, passed the molasses.

"Thank you," Charley accepted, putting a spoonful of the molasses into his tea, and wondering why it was used instead of sugar, but venturing no question. Had he asked, Skipper Zeb would have told him that it was much less expensive than sugar, and that sugar was a luxury they could not afford.

There were no vegetables, for on the Lab-

rador coast the summers are too short and too cold to grow them, and not one of the Twig family had ever so much as tasted a potato or an onion or a tomato, or, indeed, any of the wholesome vegetables that we, in our kindlier land, have so plentifully, and accept as a matter of course. But Charley and the Twigs, old and young, found the stewed bear's meat, with Mrs. Twig's light, fluffy dumplings and the good bread and molasses, both satisfying and appetizing; and when Charley declined a third helping, urged upon him by Skipper Zeb, he declared that he was as full as though he had eaten a Christmas dinner.

When all were finished, Skipper Zeb bowed his head and gave thanks for the bountiful meal; and then, with Toby's assistance, drew the benches and chests back to the wall.

"Set down, now, and when I lights my pipe we'll talk over this fix you're gettin' in," said Skipper Zeb. Drawing a pipe and a plug of black tobacco and a jack-knife from his pocket, he shaved some of the plug into the palm of his left hand, rolled it between his palms, and filled the pipe. Then, with some deliberation, he selected a long, slender

sliver from the wood box, ignited it at the stove, lighted his pipe and carefully extinguished the burning sliver.

"This *is* a fix, now! Well, now, *'tis* a fix!" Skipper Zeb sat down upon a bench by Charley's side, and for a minute or two puffed his pipe in silence, sending up a cloud of smoke. Then, turning to Charley, he boomed: "But 'tis not such a bad fix we can't get out of un! No, sir! We'll see about *this* fix! We'll see!"

"Thank you," said Charley gratefully, and with hope that there might be a way out of his trouble after all.

"Now, to start in the beginning, and that's where most things have to start," said Skipper Zeb, "we won't worry about un. Worry is bad for the insides of a man's head, and what's bad for the insides of a man's head is bad for all of his insides, and if he worries, and keeps un up, he gets sick. To-day is to-day and to-morrow is to-morrow. 'Tis but sense for a man to provide for to-morrow, and do his best to do un, but if he can't there's no use his worryin' about un. That's how I figgers. You're feelin' well and hearty to-day?"

"Yes," admitted Charley.

"You just had a good snack of vittles?"

"Yes."

"You're warm and snug?"

"Yes."

"There you be! The worst of un's took care of to start with! Feelin' well, a belly full of good vittles, warm and snug! Now keep feelin' contented, and right as if this was your own home. Nothin' to worry over. No, sir, not a thing! Now we've headed off the worst of un.

"You're in a fix, but 'twon't trouble us any. Not us! Life is full of fixes, first and last. 'Twouldn't be much fun livin' if we didn't get in fixes now and again! 'Tis a fine bit of sport figgerin' the way out of fixes. Fixes gives us a change and somethin' to think about. There's a way out of most fixes *I* finds, even the worst of un."

"Do you think the ship will come back for me?" asked Charley anxiously.

"Well, now," Skipper Zeb wrinkled his forehead as though he were pondering the question deeply, "if she comes back she'll come in through the tickle and come to in the offing and blow her whistle, and we'll hear un, and be ready for she. If she don't come back, she'll not blow her whistle, and

we'll not hear un. We'll be stayin' here as snug as a bear in his den and listen for that whistle."

"But *do* you think she'll come back?" insisted Charley, with a suspicion that Skipper Zeb's answer had been evasive.

"That's a question! That's a fair and square question, now," admitted Skipper Zeb. "You asks un fair and I'll answer un fair. The folk on the mail boat misses you. They looks up and down and don't find you. You're not on the boat, and how can they find you? Captain Barcus of the mail boat says, 'Well, he's gone, that's sure. If he leaves the mail boat at Pinch-In Tickle, he's with Skipper Zeb Twig by now, and safe enough and well took care of. If he falls overboard, that's the last of he.' And sayin' this, and knowin' Captain Barcus the way I knows he, he keeps right on to St. Johns, and don't come back till next June or July month."

"If the ship don't come," broke in Charley, suddenly startled into his old fear, "what *can* I do? What *will* become of me?"

"Well, now!" and Skipper Zeb broke into a hearty laugh. "'Tis just what I says

in the beginnin' about no worry, and about to-day bein' to-day and to-morrow bein' to-morrow. You're cast away with shelter *and* grub. That's not so bad, considerin'. Not the best of shelter and not the best of grub, but not so bad either. You does your best to get out of this fix, and the best way you finds is to bide right where you finds the shelter and grub. If the mail boat don't come to-day, and I says fair and square, I'm not expectin' she, you goes to Double Up Cove in the marnin' with us. Whilst you're on The Labrador our home is your home, and I hopes you'll like un."

"But Daddy! Poor Daddy! He'll be broken-hearted when he thinks I've been lost at sea, and so will Mother!" Charley gulped hard to keep back the tears.

"'Twill be a bit hard for un, but you can't help un," Skipper Zeb consoled. "What's past is past, and there's no use worryin' about un. You're busy tryin' to get out of a fix. They'll be so glad to see you when you gets home, 'twill more than make up to un for the mournin' they does now. Your feelin' bad and worryin' about un won't help your father and mother any, and it'll get your insides upset, as I were sayin'. You're gettin'

out of a fix. You stick by the grub and shelter, such as 'tis, and make the best of un, and be happy."

"Oh, thank you!" and tears came into Charley's eyes in spite of his effort to keep them back. "Daddy will make it right with you. He'll pay you for being good to me. He'll pay you all you ask."

"I asks nothing," said Skipper Zeb. "'Tis the right thing to do. Here on The Labrador we stands shoulder to shoulder, and when a man's cast away we takes him to our home till he can get to his own home. We all be wonderful glad to have you. Ask Mrs. Twig, now."

"'Twill be wonderful fine to have you bide with us," and Mrs. Twig's smile left no doubt of her sincerity. "You and Toby will be havin' rare good times together."

"That we will, now!" broke in Toby quite excited at the prospect.

IV

MISSING

MR. HENRY WISE, Mr. Bruce Norton's secretary, was enjoying himself. The mail boat did not offer the luxuries to which he was accustomed, to be sure, but it was much more to his liking than a hunting camp in the wilderness, particularly in frosty weather and flying snow. He could not keep his shoes properly polished, nor creases in his trousers, nor a spotless collar tramping upon rough trails through underbrush, and the very thought of sleeping in a tent, and upon the ground, was horrible.

When he had suggested to Mr. Norton that Charley was too young to follow his father on the trail, he had done so with the hope that he might be permitted to remain at St. Johns in charge of Charley, and there enjoy the comfort of a hotel in idleness. That the hunting trip might prove too strenuous for Charley had not occurred to Mr. Norton until the suggestion came from Mr. Wise after their arrival in St. Johns. Mr.

Wise amplified his suggestion with the argument that it was quite too great a physical undertaking for any boy of thirteen, and might therefore create in Charley a distaste for future camping in the wilds.

This appealed to Mr. Norton as reasonable. He wished his boy to love the wilds as he loved them. Perhaps, he admitted, Mr. Wise was right, and if he took Charley with him, and Charley found the trails too hard, not only his own holiday would be spoiled, but Charley would have anything but a pleasant time.

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In expectation that he would take him on his hunting expedition, Mr. Norton had promised Charley a unique and enjoyable experience. Now that he had decided against it, he cast about for a substitute. Mr. Norton was a man of his word. Charley had looked forward with keen anticipation to the hunting trip with his father, and had asked innumerable questions concerning it, and talked of little else since leaving New York. The prospect of camping in a real wilderness with his father,—the association with his father in camp, rather than the camp itself,—was the source of Charley's anticipated pleasure.

Not realizing this, and believing that any unusual experience would please Charley quite as well, whether or not he was to take part in it himself, Mr. Norton received with satisfaction the suggestion that Charley be sent upon the Labrador cruise. This, he was satisfied, was a solution of his difficulty. A cruise on the mail boat would be an experience to be remembered, and he had no doubt would prove much more interesting to Charley than the hunting expedition.

This settled, he engaged passage on the mail boat for Charley and Mr. Wise, to the chagrin and disappointment of the latter gentleman, who was forced, however, to accept the situation with good grace. Mr. Wise had no love of the sea.

He was to be Charley's companion on the voyage. He was to learn the interesting features of the coast along which the mail boat cruised, and to explain them and point them out to Charley. In general, he was to do his utmost to make the voyage one which Charley would remember with pleasure.

But as Mr. Wise expressed himself to the mail boat doctor, he was " employed as secretary and not as nurse maid." He had no intention of shivering around in the cold. He

was going to make this voyage, which had been thrust upon him, as pleasant for himself as circumstances would permit. He pleaded sickness, and, as Charley had complained to Barney MacFarland, lay in his bunk reading novels, or sat in the smoking room playing checkers with the mail boat doctor, while Charley was left to his own resources.

It was eleven o'clock in the morning when the mail boat departed from Pinch-In Tickle. Mr. Wise was engrossed in a particularly interesting novel, and was so deeply buried in it that he failed to hear or respond to the noonday call to dinner. When, an hour later, hunger called his attention to the fact that he had not eaten, he rang for the steward, and a liberal tip brought a satisfactory luncheon to his stateroom. Thus it came to pass that he did not observe Charley's absence from the dinner table.

It was four o'clock in the afternoon when, the novel at last finished, Mr. Wise left his room to challenge the doctor to a game in the smoking room. It was not until the six o'clock evening meal that his attention was called to the fact that Charley, who was usually prompt at meals, was not present.

He had no doubt Charley had gone to his

room and fallen asleep. If his ward chose to sleep at meal time it was no fault of his. He ate leisurely, and when he was through lighted a cigar, and, prompted by compunction perhaps, looked into Charley's room. It was vacant. A sudden anxiety seized him, and nervously and excitedly he searched the deck and the smoking room. Charley was nowhere to be found, and in a state of panic he reported the disappearance to Captain Barcus.

The Captain immediately instituted an investigation, and a minute search of the ship was made, but nowhere was Charley to be found, and with every moment Mr. Hugh Wise grew more excited.

Members of the crew were called before the Captain and Mr. Wise and quizzed. The sailor to whom Charley had spoken and of whom he had requested a passage ashore, recalled the incident. The mate stated that Charley had also come to him and asked permission to go ashore in the ship's boat at Pinch-In Tickle, but as there was no room in the boat, permission had been denied. The men who manned the boat were then questioned, and all were agreed that he had not been in the boat and had not gone ashore,

and they were equally positive that he had not gone ashore at any other harbour where the vessel had stopped during the day.

Barney MacFarland recalled his conversation with Charley, when he was going off watch. He stated that the lad had seemed most unhappy and lonesome, and complained that Mr. Wise had done little to make the voyage a pleasant one for him, or to help him find entertainment. He was not on deck when Barney went on duty at eight bells.

So fertile is the imagination that two of the sailors were quite positive they had seen Charley leaning at the rail during the afternoon, and after the ship's departure from Pinch-In Tickle.

The steward was quite sure Charley had not eaten the midday meal. As there was some sea running, he had supposed that Charley had a touch of seasickness and had preferred not to eat. He had not seen Charley since breakfast, and had not been in his stateroom since early morning.

"What can we do?" asked Mr. Wise, now in complete panic. "Will you turn back?" he plead in a voice trembling with apprehension and fear. "Will you look for him, Captain? You'll turn the ship back and look

for him! You must! You must at once! We *must* find him!"

"Where would we look?" asked Captain Barcus.

"At the harbours where we stopped! At Pinch-In Tickle, or whatever you call it! Everywhere! Everywhere!" plead Mr. Wise.

"'Twould be a waste of time and fuel, and a fool's chase," said Captain Barcus quietly. "There was no way for the lad to go ashore but by the ship's boat, and 'tis plain he didn't go ashore in the boat at any port we stops at to-day. Some one would have seen him if he had, and every man of the crew says he didn't."

"Then he's on the ship somewhere!" shouted Mr. Wise excitedly, springing to his feet. "He's hiding! He's hiding somewhere on the ship!"

"He's not on the ship," said Captain Barcus gravely. "She've been searched from masthead to hold, and he's not on the ship. There's no doubting the poor lad has fallen overboard."

"Do you mean he's been—lost—at—sea?" and the terrified Wise sank limply into a seat.

"Aye," admitted Captain Barcus, "lost at sea."

"Then turn back! Turn back and look for him!" demanded Mr. Wise, again on his feet in a frenzy of excitement. "Why don't you turn back and look for him?"

"Keep your senses, man," admonished Captain Barcus. "As I said before, 'twould be a fool's job to look for him in the sea. No man knows where or when he went overboard. 'Tis likely 'twere hours ago."

Mr. Wise slouched into a seat, and with his elbows upon his knees held his head in his hands for a full minute before he spoke.

"What can I tell his father? What can I tell him? He'll discharge me! He'll think I didn't look after the boy!" and Mr. Wise's dejection was complete. "What *can* I tell him!"

"Tell him the truth. He'll discharge you likely. I would," said the Captain in blunt disgust.

"You can fix it up! You can tell him it happened through no fault of mine! Tell him something that will clear me of any charge of neglecting the boy!" Mr. Wise raised his head and looked wistfully and pleadingly at the Captain.

"You seem to be thinking more of your job than of the poor lad that's lost," and Captain Barcus, who had risen to his feet, looked down in contempt upon the cringing man. "My log will say he was last seen leaning over the starb'rd rail. That he was not at dinner nor at tea, and that you didn't miss him till after tea and long after dark, though 'tis likely he was lost overboard before dinner. And I'll put in the testimony of the last to talk with him, the mate, and the seaman, and what he said to Barney MacFarland. I'm going now to write my log while 'tis all fresh in my mind."

And leaving Mr. Wise, Captain Barcus went to his room to write in his log a true report of what apparently had happened, and the account that was finally to be given Mr. Bruce Norton upon the arrival of the steamer in St. Johns.

V

WRECKED

THERE was much to be done in Pinch-In Tickle that everything in and about Skipper Zeb's cabin, which they were to leave the following morning, should be snug and tight and tidy for the winter. There were boats to be hauled out of the water and covered, that they might be protected from the ice and snow, fishing gear and boat equipment to stow, and much cleaning to be done about the fish stage and cabin. Then there was Skipper Zeb's big trap boat to make ready for the voyage up the bay. A mast step had to be repaired, sails mended, and no end of tinkering before it met with Skipper Zeb's approval.

"I never says a thing's good enough unless 'tis right," declared Skipper Zeb. "I likes to have my boats, and fishin' gear and dog trappin's ship shape before I starts to use un. When I stops usin' they I leaves un as right as I can so they'll be ready to use when I needs un again."

For a little while Charley, the picture of gloom, watched Skipper Zeb and Toby stowing gear. Presently Skipper Zeb, who had been observing Charley out of the corner of his eye, suggested:

"Come on, lad, and lend a hand. Toby and I needs help to haul the boats up. Work's a wonderful fine medicin' for folks that's feelin' homesick. Lend Toby and me a hand, and you'll be forgettin' all about this fix you're in. I were thinkin' we'd taken all the kinks out o' that fix, and that we made out 'twere no fix at all."

"I guess I would like to help, if you'll let me," Charley admitted. "It isn't much fun standing around and doing nothing. What can I do?"

"We'll pull this un up first, she's heaviest," and Skipper Zeb indicated one of two boats that were moored at the landing. "You take the port side of un along with Toby, and I'll take the starb'rd side, and when I bawls 'Heave ho!' we'll all heave on her together."

Charley did as he was directed, and while he did not believe that he was lending much assistance, he did his best with each "heave ho!" boomed by Skipper Zeb, and in due

time the two boats were removed to a desirable distance from high tide level. Timbers were now placed under them to elevate them from the ground, and a roofing of heavy planking built over them.

It was all novel and interesting to Charley. He lent a hand here and there, and as they worked Skipper Zeb and Toby talked of the fishing season just ended, and of the winter hunting and trapping, and of journeys on snowshoes and with dogs and sledge, and related many exciting adventures, until Charley quite forgot that he was marooned in a strange land among strangers.

Before candles were lighted that evening, Charley had placed Skipper Zeb and Toby in the category of the heroes of his favourite books of adventure. Here he was in a wilderness as remote as any of which he had ever read, and here he was with folk who were living the life and doing the deeds and meeting the adventures of which he had often read with breathless interest. When he went to sleep that night in a bunk with Toby he would have been glad that the mail boat had not returned for him, had it not been for the regret he felt for the grief he knew that his mother and father would suffer when Mr.

Wise would report to them that he had been lost.

They ate breakfast by candle-light the following morning, and daybreak was still two hours away when Charley embarked with Skipper Zeb and the family for the voyage to Double Up Cove.

Skipper Zeb and Toby hoisted leg-o'-mutton sails on the foremast and mainmast under the lee of the land though the sails did not fill to Skipper Zeb's satisfaction, and he and Toby each shipped a big oar and pulled for a little until they were in the open bay and beyond the shelter of the hills. Then they stowed the oars, and Skipper Zeb took the tiller.

A good breeze now bellied the sails, and almost immediately the morning darkness swallowed up the outline of the cabins. No star, no light, no land was to be seen, and Charley was only conscious of the swishing waters that surrounded them. He wondered how Skipper Zeb could know the direction with no landmarks to guide him. How vast and mysterious this new world was! How far away and unreal the land from which he had come! He tried to visualize home, and the city streets with crowded traffic and

jostling people; and crouching down in the boat a thought of the luxury and comfort of his snug bed, in which he would now have been cozily tucked were he there, came to him, and he drew the collar of his ulster more closely around his ears, and thrust his hands into its deep pockets.

For a long time no one spoke, and a sense of great loneliness was stealing upon him, when Skipper Zeb, lighting his pipe, remarked:

"'Tis a good sailin' breeze, and come day 'twill be smarter, with more sea, and I'm thinkin' more snow."

"How long a trip is it?" asked Charley.

"'Tis a short cruise. With a fair wind like we has now we makes un in five or six hours, whatever," explained Skipper Zeb. "We never bides here so late in the year. 'Tis wonderful late for us. We always goes before the end of September month. This year I stays to help Mr. McClung."

"It's a fine, big boat," said Charley.

"She's a wonderful fine boat!" boasted Skipper Zeb. "Twenty-eight foot over all. I buys she last year from a schooner crew, south bound after the fishin' ends. They wants to sell she bad, because they has no

room to stow she on deck, and in the rough sea that were runnin' they couldn't tow she. I buys she for thirty dollars!"

"That was cheap, I should think," said Charley.

"'Twere, now!" and there was pride in Skipper Zeb's voice. "I'll tell you how 'twere. We needs a trap boat wonderful bad for our cruisin', and I says to Mrs. Twig, 'We'll skimp and save till we gets enough saved to buy un.' So each year we saves a bit, sometimes more and sometimes less, goin' without this and that, and not mindin', because when we goes without somethin' we thinks about what a fine boat 'tis goin' to help us get. And so we keeps savin' and savin' and skimpin' and skimpin'. We were savin' for un for four years ——"

"Five years, Zeb," Mrs. Twig corrected.

"You're right, Sophia, 'twere five years, and we has thirty dollars saved. Then along comes the schooner with the boat, and the skipper says to me, 'Skipper Zeb, you wants a trap boat. I'll sell you this un.' 'How much does you want for un?' says I. 'You can have she for fifty dollars,' says he, 'and that's givin' she to you.' 'All I has is thirty dollars,' says I. 'Give me the thirty dollars

and take un,' says he. 'I'd have to leave un behind whatever.' And so I gets un."

"You *were* lucky!" said Charley.

"Lucky! Not that!" objected Skipper Zeb. "'Twere the Lard's doin's. He knows how bad I wants un, and how we skimps to get un, and He says to that skipper, 'You just sell that trap boat to Skipper Zeb Twig for thirty dollars,' and the skipper just ups and sells un to me. *I* says the Lard were good, and I thanks *He* for un, and not luck."

The northeast wind was rising. Charley huddled down in the bottom of the boat, where he found some protection. A gray dawn was breaking, and this is the coldest and bleakest hour of the day. With dawn both wind and cold increased, until by mid-forenoon half a gale was blowing.

"We're makin' fine headway," said Toby. "We'll be getting to Double Up Cove by twelve o'clock, *what*ever."

"I'm wishin' 'twere a bit calmer," observed Skipper Zeb, looking critically at the sky, "but there's no signs of un."

"Can't we make a landin' somewhere, and wait for un to calm down?" asked Mrs. Twig solicitously. "I fears cruisin' when 'tis so rough."

"They's no fair shore to land on this side o' the Duck's Head," answers Skipper Zeb.

White horses were chasing each other over the surrounding sea. A half hour later the wind had developed into a gale. Skipper Zeb reefed the mainsail. Then taking a long oar from the boat, he dropped it between two pegs astern, and while he used this as a sculling oar to steer the boat, Toby unshipped the rudder and dragged it aboard.

"She's makin' leeway," Skipper Zeb explained, "and I can hold she up to the wind better with the oar than the tiller."

A roller broke over the boat, and left a foot of water in the bottom. Toby seized a bucket, and began to bail it out. Charley was now thoroughly frightened, but with a bucket thrust into his hand by Mrs. Twig, he assisted Toby.

The boat was on her beam ends, even with shortened sail. The air was filled with flying spray, and now came the snow that Skipper Zeb had predicted.

"We'll make a landin' in the lee of the Duck's Head," shouted Skipper Zeb, his voice booming above the tumult of sea and wind.

Violet was crying, and clinging to her mother.

"Don't be scared, now!" Skipper Zeb reassured, though he was plainly anxious. "There'll be a fine lee above the Duck's Head!"

"There's the Duck's Head!" Toby's voice suddenly came in warning.

"I sees un!" Skipper Zeb shouted back in confirmation.

"Take care the reef! She's straight ahead!" yelled Toby.

"She's makin' leeway the best I can do," came back from Skipper Zeb. "Lend me a hand, Toby!"

Toby sprang to his assistance. The long oar bent under the superhuman effort that the two put forth, but the boat was coming up. Charley saw, in dim outline through the snow, a high, black mass of rock jutting out in a long point. It bore a strong resemblance to a duck's neck and head, and as though to form the duck's bill a reef extended for several yards beyond into the water and over this the sea with boom and roar heaved in mighty breakers, sending the spray a hundred feet into the air. If they failed to pass that awful boiling caldron they would be

lost. It was a terrifying spectacle, and Charley's heart stood still.

They were close upon the reef. Skipper Zeb's face was tense. He was working like a giant, and Toby, too, was putting all the strength he possessed upon the sculling oar. With a scant margin to spare, they were at last shooting past the outer rocks, when the oar snapped with a report that was heard above the boom of the breakers.

An instant later came a crash, Violet screamed in terror, and Charley felt the bottom of the boat rise beneath his feet.

VI

THE CAMP AT THE DUCK'S HEAD

WHEN Skipper Zeb's oar broke, the boat, now at the mercy of the wind, was driven upon a submerged rock at the tip end of the reef extending some twenty yards out from the cliff known as the Duck's Head. Here it stuck for what seemed to Charley a long time, reeling in the surf until he was quite certain it would roll over and they would all be drowned. Mrs. Twig, clinging with Violet to the mainmast, gave a shrill cry of despair, and Violet screamed in terror. Then a mighty sea lifted them like a chip from the rock, and swept the boat onward and beyond the reef.

Rolling and wallowing in the angry sea, which threatened every moment to swallow it up, the boat still floated to the astonishment of all, and Skipper Zeb and Toby, with feverish zeal shipping a fresh oar, began sculling toward the sheltered and calm waters under the lee of the Duck's Head.

The wind in their quarter helped them, and with a few mighty strokes of the oar the boat was carried beyond the reach of the rollers, and a few minutes later, submerged to her gunwale, grounded upon a narrow strip of gravelly beach on the western side of the Duck's Head, and Skipper Zeb carried Violet ashore, while the other half drowned and half frozen voyageurs followed.

A quantity of driftwood lined the base of the cliff. With an ax, which Skipper Zeb recovered from the boat, he quickly split some sticks, whittled shavings with his jackknife from the dry hearts of the split sticks, lighted these with a match from a supply which he carried in a small corked bottle, and which were thus protected from the water, and in an incredibly short time a cheerful fire was blazing.

"Well, now!" Skipper Zeb exclaimed, genially, warming his hands before the fire. "Here we are safe and sound and none of us lost, as I were fearin' when we strikes the rock we might be! All of us saved by the mercy of the Lard! How is you feelin' now, Vi'let?"

"I feels fine, with the fire," answered Violet, who was snuggling close to her mother.

"That's pluck, now! And wet as a muskrat!" exclaimed Skipper Zeb, laughing heartily, and quite as though it were an ordinary occurrence, and they had not, a few minutes before, been in peril of their lives. Turning to Charley, he asked: "And how be you, lad?"

"I'm all right now, thank you," said Charley shivering still with the cold. "But I never was so wet and cold in my life, and I'm sure I'd have frozen stiff if you hadn't made a fire in a hurry. It's lucky you had some matches in a bottle, for that's all that kept them dry."

"No, no, 'twaren't luck!" objected Skipper Zeb. "'Twere just sense! I never goes cruisin' without dry matches corked tight in a bottle handy in my pocket, and I never uses un unless my other matches gets wet. There's times when it's the only way to get a fire, and without un to-day I'm not doubtin' some of us would have perished."

"I always carries un too," said Toby.

"Aye, a man that cruises in this land must always be ready to put a fire on," commended Skipper Zeb.

"I'll remember that," said Charley.

"'Twere a narrow shave we has," re-

marked Toby, "but you always gets out of fixes, Dad. When I looks through the snow and sees the white water rollin' over the reef right handy ahead, and the wind drivin' us on to un, I thinks, now here's a *fix!* 'Tis a wonderful bad fix! Dad can't be gettin' us out of *this* fix, whatever! I'll be just watchin' now, and see! Dad can't get us out of this un! And then you gets the oar and pulls us up into the wind, and we has room to pass fine, and then I says, Dad's doin' it! Dad's gettin' us out of the fix! Then the oar breaks, and I says that's the end of *us!* But you gets out of un, *what*ever! You're wonderful fine at gettin' out of fixes, Dad!"

"'Tweren't me," objected Skipper Zeb, "'twere the Lard. We does the best we can, and when the Lard sees we does our best, He steps in and helps. He says, 'These folk does the best *they* can to get out of this fix, and I'll just step in and do what they can't do, and help un out of it,' and that's what He does, and here we be, safe and sound."

"Is the boat wrecked?" asked Mrs. Twig. "Can't you fix un and use un any more?"

"Well now, I'm not knowin' rightly yet, but I'm fearin' her bottom's knocked out of

she," answered Skipper Zeb. "If 'tis, 'twill be the end of she, but we'll be makin' out as fine as can be without she."

"'Tis too bad to lose she after all our skimpin' and savin' to buy she," mourned Mrs. Twig. "You were wantin' she so bad, and we were savin' and skimpin' for five years, and when you got she you were so pleased over she, and she were helpin' you so in the fishin'."

"Aye, she were a fine help," admitted Skipper Zeb cheerfully. "But I were thinkin' maybe she were a bit too big to be handy. Leastways to-day is to-day and to-morrow is to-morrow, and if she's wrecked she's wrecked, and that's the end of she. We won't worry and fuss about what's gone and can't be helped, and maybe some day we'll be gettin' a better boat. We'll just thank the Lard we're safe and sound."

Skipper Zeb put some fresh wood upon the fire, and then, pausing to rub his hands over the blaze, he chuckled audibly.

"I'm feelin' wonderful glad to be thinkin' how all of us be alive and safe," he said in explanation. "The Lard were wonderful good to us to be bringin' us all ashore. Now we'll get snug. Toby, lad, we'll try to get

the things out of the boat, and we'll put up the tent and the stove, and before night comes we'll be as dry and tight as ever we were in our lives."

It was no easy matter to transfer the cargo from the submerged boat. It was snowing hard, and the water was icy cold, and Skipper Zeb would not permit Charley to go into the boat with himself and Toby.

"You be stayin' ashore," he directed, "and keep the fire up for Mrs. Twig and Vi'let."

"But I want to help! I want to do my part!" protested Charley. "Perhaps I can't do much, but I can do something. You've been so kind to me and took me in when I had no place to go! Now I want to do what I can, and not have you do everything for me."

"That's fine now! That's spirit! You'll be makin' a real Labradorman before you leaves us. But not bein' used to un," Skipper Zeb explained, "you'd be findin' the water a bit coolish. We're used to un. We're wet at the fishin' all summer. 'Tis best you stays by the fire and gets warmed up, and gets your clothes dry."

But when Charley insisted that he do something to help, Skipper Zeb agreed that he

might carry the things back from the shore, as they were brought from the boat, and pile them near the fire.

"Then they'll be handy for us to get at and dry out, and the work'll be keepin' you warm and free from chill," said Skipper Zeb, "and 'twill be better than gettin' in the water with Toby and me."

Skipper Zeb and Toby, waist deep in the boat, rescued the various articles of the cargo and passed them to Charley, who worked with a will until everything was salvaged. A tent was then quickly set up in the lee of the cliff, a tent stove placed in the tent, a fire lighted in the stove, and in fifteen minutes the tent was warm and snug and cozy.

A bag of flour was now opened, and it was found that while the outside was wet, the greater part of the center was dry, and in a jiffy Mrs. Twig was mixing dough bread, a kettle was over for tea, and Skipper Zeb had some bear's meat sizzling in the pan and sending forth a most delicious and appetizing odour.

"Well, now!" exclaimed Skipper Zeb when they were all gathered in the warm tent, and Mrs. Twig had piled their plates with meat and hot bread and passed each of

them a cup of steaming hot tea, "here we are in as snug a berth as can be, safe and sound, with nothin' to worry about even if we be a bit wet."

"It is cozy," agreed Charley, with a mouthful of the hot bread, "and I never tasted anything so good!"

"Hunger be a wonderful fine spice for vittles," remarked Skipper Zeb. "Are you all warmed up, now?"

Everybody was warm, and wet clothing was steaming in the overheated tent.

"I'm wonderful thankful you makes the cruise to the Post early," said Mrs. Twig. "'Twere fine to get our winter outfit in September month, and get un safe up to Double Up Cove whilst fair weather held. If we'd had un to-day all the flour and tea and hard bread[1] would be spoiled. As 'tis, we loses the boat and so much else it makes my heart sick to think of un."

"Well, now!" exclaimed Skipper Zeb. "Worryin' when we has everything to be thankful for! We has the boat for the cruise in September month, just when we needs un most. Now we don't need un this year again. The things we loses we'll make out without.

[1] Hardtack.

Everything works fine for us, and here we be, snug as a bear in his den, eatin' good vittles, even if we be a bit wet."

"I can't help worryin' about the boat," insisted Mrs. Twig. "I'm 'tis feelin' bad for you not havin' she."

"Don't feel bad about un, Mother," and there was a tenderness in Skipper Twig's voice that Charley noted. "'Twere the Lard's doin's."

When the meal was finished Mrs. Twig and Violet were left in the tent to dry their clothing, and to hang the blankets from the ridge in an attempt to dry them also. With one of the sails a lean-to shelter was made by the open fire outside, and while Skipper Zeb was busy with this, Toby and Charley broke boughs for a seat, and here the three devoted themselves to drying their own clothing.

"How can we get from here without a boat?" asked Charley.

"Now that's a fair question!" admitted Skipper Zeb, "but 'tis easy to answer. We're not so far from Double Up Cove. I can walk un in an hour, whatever. Toby and I goes in the marnin', if the sea calms down in the night, and I'll be comin' with another boat. I'm thinkin' 'twill clear before we

turns in, whatever. 'Twere only a squall, and 'tis about over. To-morrow's like to be a fair day."

Late in the afternoon, as Skipper Zeb predicted, the snow ceased, the sky cleared and the wind moderated. The campfire outside was so cheerful Mrs. Twig and Violet came out of the tent to cook their supper there; and while Mrs. Twig cooked, Skipper Zeb laid a fragrant, springy bed of boughs within the tent.

They all sat around the fire and ate in the light of its blaze. And when they were through, Skipper Zeb lighted his pipe, and told stories of his life at sea as a fisherman and on the winter trail as a trapper and hunter that were as full of thrills as any Charley had ever read, until it was time to go to the tent and to bed.

It had been the most exciting and adventurous day of Charley's life. He was thankful for his escape. Within his heart welled something of the exultation that one feels who meets and conquers obstacles. True, he had done little himself to aid in the escape, but he had done something. He had taken part in the transference of the cargo, and in pitching the tent, and breaking boughs. He

had helped make the camp, and had more than the passive interest of a visitor in it.

What tales he would have to tell when he returned home! He had not enjoyed the experience of the day as an experience, but already in retrospect he was thrilled by it. The fellows would surely envy him! When he was wet to the skin and chilled to numbness, he had longed again and again for the warmth of the mail boat, even with its unsavoury smells, and he had asked himself why he had been so foolish as to go ashore. Now that he was dry and warm, his regrets passed, and he felt himself quite a hero.

Within, the tent was warm and cozy. The air was perfumed with the spicy fragrance of spruce mingled with the pleasant odour of the woodfire, the incense of the wilderness. Outside he could hear the seas breaking upon the cliff off the Duck's Head and over the reef, and listening to the pounding seas outside, and the cheerful crackling of the fire in the stove, he fell into pleasant dreams.

VII

A SNUG BERTH

IT was Charley Norton's first experience in a wilderness camp, but he slept quite as well as he could have slept in his own bed at home, and perhaps more soundly. He had lain down wearied with the day's excitement and exertion, as he had never been wearied before.

The strokes of an ax outside awakened him, and he hurried out to find Skipper Zeb and Toby preparing breakfast over an open fire. It was early. The sky was studded with stars, and he stood for a moment to look out over the starlit and now peaceful waters of the bay. No longer were the shrieking winds and the booming breakers to be heard, and no sound broke the silence other than the gentle rhythmic lap of the waters over the reef.

Rising above the snow-covered foreground, towered the grim cliff of the Duck's Head. The two figures bending over the brightly burning fire at its base were pigmies

as compared to its great bulk. The romance and the mystery of the scene thrilled Charley. He breathed deeply of the crisp, frosty, perfumed air, as he hastened to join Skipper Zeb and Toby.

"Right on time!" exclaimed Skipper Zeb. "Were you sleepin' warm and snug the night? I keeps the fire on in the stove to make un warm. The blankets were a bit damp."

"I never woke up till I heard you chopping wood," said Charley.

"Feelin' good after yesterday's wettin' and chillin'?" asked Skipper Zeb solicitously.

"Fine and dandy!" Charley answered. "Isn't it great out here!"

"'Tis a fine marnin'," agreed Skipper Zeb. "Toby and I thinks we'll be makin' an early start, so I'll be comin' early with the boat."

"May I go with you?" asked Charley eagerly.

"Well, now!" and Skipper Zeb looked doubtfully at Charley's leather shoes and heavy ulster. "You'd be findin' that coat a weary burden, and you'd be gettin' wonderful cold feet."

"I were dryin' out my other adikey," suggested Toby. "Charley might wear un. I'll

soften up my other skin boots for he, and let him have a pair of my duffle socks."

"Aye," agreed Skipper Zeb, "he might wear they. Get un, b'y."

In a moment Toby produced from the tent an adikey made of heavy white woolen cloth, a pair of thick woolen slippers made of heavy blanket cloth, and a pair of knee-high black sealskin boots with moccasin feet. The latter were hard as boards, but by rubbing the skin upon the rounded end of a stick Toby soon had them soft and pliable.

Charley took off his leather shoes, donned the woolen slippers, and over these pulled the sealskin boots which met his knickers, and with a buckskin draw string tied the boot tops just below the knees. Then, removing his ulster, he drew the hooded adikey over his head.

"You looks now like you belong here," commented Toby, much pleased.

"Anyhow," said Charley, "I feel a lot more comfortable, dressed this way."

"Now we'll eat a bit and get started," suggested Skipper Zeb, passing the frying-pan which contained fried salt pork, smoking hot. "We'll be leavin' Mother and Vi'let to rest as long as they wants."

It was a half hour later, and dawn was just breaking, when Skipper Zeb and Toby picked up their rifles, and with Skipper Zeb in the lead, and Charley bringing up the rear, they set out for Double Up Cove.

For a little while they followed the shore, single file, making their way through tangles of willow brush, or over piles of boulders that had been loosed from the cliffs above by the frosts of untold winters, and rolled down to the base of the cliff. It was the hardest work Charley had ever done, and he felt some pride in the fact that he was able to keep close at Toby's heels, quite unaware that Skipper Zeb was making what to him and Toby was a slow pace, in order that Charley's unaccustomed legs might not lag too far behind.

Presently the cliffs receded into sloping hills, covered with a forest of spruce and tamarack, and here they turned into the forest along the slopes, where walking proved much easier, though still more difficult than Charley had expected.

Suddenly some birds arose with a great whir of wings, and alighted in a tree.

"Spruce pa'tridges!" exclaimed Toby.

In a twinkling Skipper Zeb and Toby had

their rifles at their shoulders, and with the report of the rifles, which was almost simultaneous, two of the birds fell to the snow below.

To Charley's astonishment, the remaining birds did not fly from the tree, and still they remained when two more were shot, and in the end Skipper Zeb and Toby bagged the whole flock of nine. In each case the head had been neatly clipped off by the bullet, and the body of the bird was unmarred and uninjured.

"We has two good meals whatever," remarked Skipper Zeb, as they gathered up the birds. "We'll pluck un whilst they're warm. 'Tis easier to do than after they gets cold. 'Twill give us a bit of time to rest."

"Why didn't the others fly after you shot the first ones?" asked Charley. "I expected they'd be frightened and all fly away after the first shot."

"That's the way with spruce pa'tridges," explained Skipper Zeb. "They has a wonderful foolish way with un. They don't fly when you shoots. They're so tame you could almost knock un over with a stick. They flies in a tree when we comes, thinkin' we're like a fox and can't climb a tree, and knowin'

nothin' about guns there they sets and lets us shoot un."

To Skipper Zeb and Toby, the shooting of the grouse had meant no more than a means of securing necessary food. In that land where there are no domestic animals or birds, men must hunt the wild things to supply their table, just as a farmer in civilized lands kills chickens from his flock to supply his table. Charley assisted in plucking the birds, and silently admiring the marksmanship of his companions, determined that he, too, would learn to shoot well.

The sun had risen, and the winter forest gleamed and sparkled under its rays. Through the trees the waters of the bay glinted like molten silver. The air was redolent with forest fragrance. An impudent Labrador Jay[1] scolding them in its harsh voice, came so close that Charley could almost have caught it with his bare hands. Chickadees[2] chirped in the trees. A three-toed arctic woodpecker hammered industriously upon a tree trunk. In the distance a red squirrel chattered happily and noisily.

A thrill of exultation tingled Charley's

[1] Similar to the Canada Jay, but with darker upper parts and head.

[2] The Hudsonian Chickadee.

spine. He was doing the very thing that his father had believed too hard for him to do, and in a wilder country than his father had ever seen. How proud and pleased his father would be when he reached home and told of what he had seen and done! It would compensate for all the suffering at his supposed loss.

"Plenty of rabbits this year," remarked Toby, calling Charley's attention to a network of tracks that covered the snow. "We'll be settin' snares for un. 'Tis great sport."

"Oh, can we snare them?" said Charley. "That will be great."

"Aye," promised Toby, "and we'll be settin' marten traps too. Here's some marten signs now. There's fine signs of marten this year."

"You catch martens for the fur, don't you?" asked Charley.

"Aye," answered Toby. "They has wonderful fine fur. Weren't you ever seein' a marten?"

"No," confessed Charley, "I never saw one."

"You'll be seein' they this winter, whatever," promised Toby.

Toby pointed to the tracks of a small animal in the snow.

It was mid-forenoon when they suddenly came upon a cabin in the midst of a clearing at the edge of the forest, and looking out upon the water.

"Well, now, and here we be safe and sound and in good time!" announced Skipper Zeb.

He opened a door leading into an enclosed porch, which was built against one end of the cabin, and through the porch they entered the cabin. Charley observed that neither the porch door nor the inner door was locked, and that the latches of both were made of wood, and opened by pulling a string, which hung outside.

"Not so bad a place to be cast away in!" boomed Skipper Zeb, surveying the room with pride after depositing his gun upon the beams overhead. "What does you think of your new home, now? 'Twere easy enough to get you out o' *that* fix, says I! Easy enough!"

"It's great!" exclaimed Charley in appreciation. "I'm going to have a bang-up time with you! I feel at home already!"

"That's fine, now! Fine!" and Skipper

Zeb slapped Charley on the shoulder with his big hand and laughed his hearty laugh. "No worries! To-day's to-day and to-morrow's to-morrow! Cast away with plenty o' grub and a snug shelter and berth! Not so bad! Not so bad! That's gettin' out of a fix, now! Half the time a man worries there's nothin' to worry about. The worst fix a man ever gets in can't last. There's sure to be an end to un."

"It seems like a lot to ask of you—taking me into your home this way," said Charley appreciatively. "Dad'll make it up to you some day, after I get home."

"Nothin' to make up, if you means pay me!" broke in Skipper Zeb, rather resenting the implication that he might expect payment. "'Tis the way of The Labrador, and the way of the Lard, to share what we has with castaway folk or folk that's in trouble. 'Tis a pleasure to have you with us, lad. Mrs. Twig and I'll just be havin' two lads instead of one the winter, and we were always wishin' we has two. So here you be out o' your fix, and we're all happy as a swile on a sunny rock."

"I'm wonderful glad to have you, too," added Toby. "I gets wishin' I had some one

to hunt with me, when Dad's away. We'll be huntin' and cruisin' about together, and have a fine time."

"It's just great to be with you!" and Charley said it with a full and appreciative heart.

"Now, lads, help me put the boat in the water, and I'll pull over to the Duck's Head for Mother and Vi'let and the cargo," said Skipper Zeb. "Whilst I'm gone, Toby, put on a fire and make the house snug."

Charley and Toby helped Skipper Zeb launch a boat, which was drawn up upon the beach below the cabin, and when he had set out for the Duck's Head, the boys returned to the cabin, and Toby kindled a fire in a big oblong box stove.

It was a small cabin, but snug and homelike, and much more comfortable than the one they had left at Pinch-In Tickle. There was no covering upon the floor, but the boards were white and clean with much scrubbing. Sections of old newspapers and picture pages from old magazines were pasted upon the log walls, and completely covered them. These kept out no small degree of winter wind and cold, and at the same time did duty as decorations. Charley ob-

served with interest several guns resting upon the beams overhead.

There were no chairs in the room, and storage chests served as seats. A table occupied the center of the room, and this had doubtless been built by Skipper Zeb himself. Against the side wall was a shelf upon which stood a silent clock. At one side of the clock was a small Bible, at the other a candlestick. A bed built against a corner of the room and a dish closet completed its furnishings.

A partition across the rear of the cabin formed a second room, and built against the wall, one at each end of this room, were two beds similar to that in the living-room.

"I sleeps in this un in the big room, and you'll be sleepin' with me," Toby advised. "Mother and Dad and Violet sleeps in the beds in the back room."

The rear of the entrance porch was piled with firewood ready for the stove, ranked in tiers which reached nearly to the roof, while upon the walls in front hung dog harness, several pairs of snowshoes, traps and other gear incident to a hunter's life.

Primitive and crude as was the cabin, it appealed to Charley, doubtless in contrast to his recent experiences, as most comfortable

and homelike. This feeling of comfort increased when Toby wound the clock, and it began ticking its welcome.

Toby was quite excited at his return to his winter home. He must needs see and show Charley everything inside and outside the cabin, and Charley was interested in all he saw, but most of all in the big, broad snowshoes and the dog harness.

"Where are the dogs?" Charley asked.

"We leaves un over at Tom Ham's whilst we were at the fishin' in summer," explained Toby. "Tom Ham lives at Lucky Bight, ten miles to the nuth'ard from here. We'll be goin' for un soon now."

"It must be fun traveling with dogs," said Charley.

"Aye, 'tis that," agreed Toby, "when the weather's fair and the travelin' is good. When the weather's nasty with snow or high winds and frost, or when the goin' is soft, 'tis hard cruisin' with dogs."

When Skipper Zeb returned at one o'clock with Mrs. Twig and Violet, and the cargo from the wrecked boat, Toby and Charley had a pot of grouse stewing upon the stove and ready for the dumplings which Mrs. Twig quickly prepared.

"'Twill be fine for you lads to set some rabbit snares this evenin'," suggested Skipper Zeb, when dinner was finished. "Rabbit stew would make fine eatin'. Whilst you're gone, I'll be snuggin' up and makin' things tidy around the house. Comin' Monday I'll start settin' up the traps on my path, and I'm thinkin' to take you lads with me on the first round I makes. When you gets back I'm thinkin' 'twill be well to get the dogs from Tom Ham's if he don't bring un before. He'll have his wood hauled, and there'll be good footin' for you lads to take the team and haul our wood by then."

This was exciting news to Charley. The dogs! How he wanted to see Eskimo sledge dogs in harness! And to set traps with a real trapper and hunter! He could scarce wait for the time to come.

VIII

THE TRAIL OF A LYNX

EVENING down on The Labrador begins directly after twelve o'clock, noon, and therefore by Labrador reckoning it was already evening. It was Skipper Zeb's intention that the boys set out immediately, and he emphasized this by bidding them:

"Bide a bit whilst I find some proper twine. The old twine you has last year Toby, lad, were not strong enough to hold rabbits when you catches un."

"'Twere wonderful poor twine," agreed Toby, "and I loses half the rabbits, whatever, that gets in the snares."

Skipper Zeb began rummaging in one of the storage chests, and presently produced a ball of heavy, smooth, closely wound twine.

"There's the best twine now I ever gets for snares," he declared with some pride, handing it to Toby. "The rabbits'll not be breakin' *that* twine, whatever. 'Tis stout as a small cable. I gets un in July month from Skipper Mudge o' the schooner *Lucky*

Hand. I asks he last fall when he goes home from the fishin' to get un for me in St. Johns. That's *string,* now, *that* is! 'Twill hold the biggest rabbit on the Labrador."

"Are rabbits so strong?" asked Charley.

"Strong enough to break string that's not stout enough to hold un," laughed Skipper Zeb, explaining good-naturedly: "She has to be rare stout to hold some of un. The string Toby has last year were rotten, 'twere so old, and he loses a rare lot o' rabbits that gets in the snares with un breakin' the twine, so I gets new string for this year."

"That'll hold un! 'Tis fine twine," agreed Toby, testing it. "Come on, Charley! We'll set a rare lot o' snares this evenin', and have rabbit for dinner to-morrow."

The boys hurried into their adikeys, and Toby carrying his rifle, and Charley a light ax, which Toby selected from three or four in the shed, the two set out.

"We can't set snares too handy to the house," advised Toby, turning into the forest behind the cabin, with Charley following. "The dogs would find un *too* handy, when we gets the team home from Skipper Tom's."

A thick bramble of dwarf willows and mooseberry bushes lined the shore between

the water of the bay and the spruce forest, and to avoid this Toby laid his course through the forest behind the tangle. Charley, thrilled with a sense of adventure, followed Toby eagerly as he led the way for some time in silence. This was Charley's first trapping expedition in a real wilderness! He wondered whether there were wolves or other wild animals lurking among the shadows, and he was glad that Toby had his rifle.

Suddenly Toby stopped. The white surface of the snow was covered with a thick network of tracks, among the forest trees and back among the bramble.

"They's plenty o' rabbits here," and Toby pointed to the tracks. "I never sees so much rabbit footin'. I'm thinkin' 'tis far enough so the dogs'll not be findin' the snares, and we'll start to set un here."

"Are these all rabbit tracks?" asked Charley in amazement. "There must be thousands of them!"

"Aye, there's a rare fine band of un about," agreed Toby with an appraising glance. "Here's a fine run, now! We'll be settin' the first snare on this run."

Toby pointed to a beaten path or runway,

indicating that rabbits had passed back and forth over it many times.

He proceeded at once to cut a spruce sapling. From the middle of one side of this he trimmed off the branches with his ax, leaving the thick branches on both ends and on the other side. He then laid the sapling across the runway where the runway passed between two trees, placing it in such manner that the branches on each end of the sapling supported it about eighteen inches above the snow, and the trimmed section of the sapling left an opening for the runway.

On each side of the runway he now placed an upright stick, and between the sticks and the trees on each side made a thick network of branches, that only the gateway between the sticks, with the sapling above, would be open for the passage of rabbits, and there would be no temptation to pass around or to jump over the obstruction of branches on the upper side of the sapling.

This done, he made a slipnoose on one end of a piece of twine. The other end of the twine he tied to the sapling directly over the runway, and spreading the noose around the gateway through the barricade, stood up and surveyed his work.

"There she is, all ready for un to come along and get caught," he said with pride.

"Don't you bait it with anything?" asked Charley, who had watched the making of the snare with much interest.

"No, we don't bait un," explained Toby. "'Tis a runway where rabbits goes, and they'll go right through un without bait, and get caught."

"Rabbits must be chumps to walk right into a contraption like that without any reason, when they've miles of space to go around," Charley declared.

"They're wonderful foolish creatures," said Toby. "They never seems to know enough to go around."

Darkness comes early at this season in that northern latitude, and when the boys had set six snares they suddenly became aware that it was nearly sunset. They must set out on their return to the cabin without delay.

"This *is* the life!" exclaimed Charley, as they turned back. "Seems to me an afternoon never flew so fast!"

"When I'm busy workin' I finds the time does go wonderful fast," agreed Toby. "Havin' you along it went a wonderful lot

faster'n when I'm alone, too. 'Tis fine to have you here, Charley!"

"I'm having a great time, too! It's a peck of fun getting off here in the woods away from everything, and setting snares."

"Aye, 'tis that."

"When shall we know whether we have caught anything?"

"We'll come and look at un first thing in the marnin'."

"I can't wait to see!"

"'Twill be more fun when we sets marten and fox traps. I'm goin' to ask Dad to let us have some traps, and we can trap together, and I'm not doubtin' we'll be gettin' some fur. We'll be partners."

"That'll be great! When can we start setting them?"

"When we comes back from goin' with Dad to his path."

"Where are we going now? We're not going the way we came."

"I'm takin' a short way through the timber. We may see some pa'tridges."

They walked for a few minutes in silence, when Toby, who was in the lead, suddenly stopped, and examined the snow at his feet.

"What is it?" asked Charley in excite-

ment, as Toby pointed to some large tracks in the snow.

Toby, looking in the direction in which the tracks led, said nothing for a moment. They were large tracks—nearly large enough for those of a bear, and the steps taken by the animal that made them were short steps.

"What tracks are they?" Charley repeated, with bated breath. "Are they wolf tracks or bear tracks?"

"They looks something like bear tracks, but 'tis not a bear made un," answered Toby. "'Tis not heavy enough for a bear, and bear tracks has nail marks. This un has no nail marks. A bear steps longer, too. 'Tis the track of a lynx, I'm thinkin'."

"Is a lynx dangerous?" asked Charley, a strange tingle chasing up and down his spine.

"They're not like to be unless they gets cornered," said Toby. "Anything fights when 'tis cornered. Even a fox would do that. This track is fresh. 'Twere just made. I'm thinkin' the lynx is handy by, and we might get a shot at un. He's around huntin' rabbits. Let's follow he."

"All right, I'm for it!" agreed Charley, quite excited at the prospect of a lynx hunt.

The two boys set forward in silence, following the well defined trail left by the animal. They had gone but a short distance when Toby stopped and pointed at a red-stained and trampled place in the snow, with some bits of fur lying about.

"He kills a rabbit here," whispered Toby. "See how fresh 'tis. That stick is fresh wet with the rabbit's blood. 'Tis sure a lynx. 'Tis the only beast makin' that big track that kills rabbits. I knows now 'tis a lynx."

"It must be *very* near!" whispered Charley, his heart beating fast.

"We're like to see he any minute," agreed Toby. "He's right handy. We'll have to be keepin' wonderful quiet now."

"Will he run when he sees us?" asked Charley anxiously.

"He's not like to run at first. 'Tis the way of the lynx to stop and look before he goes, but 'twould be easy to lose sight of he and lose a shot here in the timber."

Never was Charley more excited. They continued on the trail with increased caution. In every dark shadow Charley fancied he saw the figure of a crouching beast about to spring upon them. He knew that a lynx was a big cat, and he could not but wonder if, in

spite of Toby's assurance, it would not attack them from ambush. He had seen fierce panthers in the zoo at home, and with every step the lynx grew in his imagination to the proportions of the panther.

He recalled a story he had read of an attack a lynx had made upon a hunter, and the more he thought of it the surer he was that at any moment he would feel the lynx upon his back clawing and tearing at his throat. Afraid, wild eyed, and peering into every shadowy recess as they advanced, he still had no thought of deserting Toby. Come what might, he was determined to see the adventure through. In this he was heroic. One who faces danger without fear or appreciation of the danger displays no bravery. But he who faces danger, drawn on by duty as Charley felt it his duty now to stick by the side of Toby, believing himself in great peril, but still not flinching, is truly brave.

The sun had dropped behind the western hills, and the first hint of twilight was settling among the trees, when Toby without warning halted and froze where he stood. Then it was that Charley saw in the shadows ahead two eyes glowing like balls of fire and the outlines of a great crouching creature.

IX

THE FAR WILDERNESS

DELIBERATELY Toby raised his rifle to his shoulder, so deliberately that Charley was sure the lynx would spring upon them before Toby could fire. Charley held his breath, and then Toby's rifle rang out. The lynx gave a feeble lunge, and the next instant lay crumpled in a heap.

"We got un! I knocked un over!" cried Toby exultantly as the two ran forward to the prostrate animal.

"That was a fine shot!" Charley shouted, quite beside himself with excitement, and now breathing freely again.

"He'll be a fine surprise for Dad!" exclaimed Toby, surveying the carcass with vast pride. "Won't he and Mother be glad of un! The fur's not prime, but 'twill be fair, and 'tis the first fur we gets this year!"

"He won't kill any more of our rabbits!" Charley boasted, touching the furry coat of the dead animal.

"The one he kills back there where we

sees un, were the last un for he," agreed Toby.

"How'll we carry it?" asked Charley.

"'Twill be easy to carry he," assured Toby. "I'll show you how easy 'tis."

Now that the lynx was harmless to attack, and lay quiet and motionless at their feet, Charley discovered that it was a much smaller animal than he had thought when he saw its eyes and its crouching form in the shadows. Still he had no desire to meet a lynx alone in the forest, though Toby still insisted that the animal would have made no attack, and would have slipped away from them had he failed in his aim.

Toby drew the twine from his pocket, and tied together the front legs, just above the padded feet, wrapping the twine around the legs several times, and tying it in a secure knot. The hind legs were tied in similar manner. Then cutting a stiff pole, and trimming off the branches with the ax, he ran the pole between the front and hind legs, with the two ends protruding.

"Now," said Toby, "and you takes one end of the pole on your shoulder, I'll take the other on mine and we'll carry he in between us."

"I never would have thought of doing it that way," said Charley admiringly. "That's dead easy!"

It was dusk when they reached the cabin, and the lynx was growing heavy to Charley's unaccustomed shoulder, and both boys were tired and happy with the day's adventure.

"Well, now!" boomed Skipper Zeb in his biggest voice, when the boys appeared at the door. "A lynx! And a fine big un, too! And the fur's not so bad for this early in the season. You're startin' in fine as a Labrador-man!" and he slapped Charley on the shoulder. "Day before yesterday a castaway! Yesterday shipwrecked! To-day settin' rabbit snares and helpin' Toby knock over a lynx! Aye, and gettin' the lynx! That's two bad fixes you gets out of yourself, and one you gets the lynx in that he don't get out of!"

"Toby shot the lynx," said Charley modestly. "He'd have got away from me if I'd been alone, or eaten me up."

"Charley helped," Toby broke in. "He helped to trail he, though I did the shootin', and he helped to carry he home."

"Both of you gets un, though only one does the shootin'," agreed Skipper Zeb with a hearty "haw! haw! haw!" slapping the

two boys on the shoulder with vast approval. "Only one would be doin' the shootin' whatever. We'll be makin' a hunter o' you before the ship comes back in July month, lad! You'll be a true Labradorman by then. Now we'll have roast lynx for dinner tomorrow, and 'tis a fine fat un too."

Supper was not ready, and while they waited Skipper Zeb and Toby skinned the lynx, beginning at the hind feet, and drawing the skin whole and inside out over the carcass. It was then pulled snugly over a board shaped for the purpose, with the fur next the board and the fleshy side out, drawn taut and secured. Now, with a sheath knife, Skipper Zeb scraped it carefully, removing every particle of fat or flesh that adhered, and when this was completed to his satisfaction he hung the board with the pelt upon it from a peg to dry.

"It seems like a month instead of three days since I came," said Charley when supper was eaten and Skipper Zeb had lighted his pipe. "A lot has happened in three days."

"Things has happened, now! Yes, sir!" observed Skipper Zeb, puffing at his pipe. "We had a bit of a hard time yesterday, but

here we are to-day all snug and safe and well. Not one of us in a fix, and all goin' fine."

"I wonder how Mr. Wise felt when he missed me," Charley chuckled. "I can just see him running around the ship looking for me. I guess he thinks he's in a fix! Serves him right if he is worried. But," and Charley sobered, "it makes me feel badly to think of Dad and Mother when they hear I'm missing."

"Don't be thinkin' o' that now," cautioned Skipper Zeb. "'Twill do you no good and 'twill do they no good. Just be thinkin' how joyful they'll be when you goes home in July month. What a fine surprise 'twill be for un!" And then to change the line of thought, he suggested: "You'll be needin' a fit out o' clothes for the winter."

"I have some money," volunteered Charley. "I could buy things if there was a store to go to."

"There's no store this side o' Skipper Blink's shop at Deer Harbour, and that's a bit down north from Pinch-In Tickle, and we'll not be gettin' there for two months whatever," explained Skipper Zeb. "Mother, how can we fit out the lad for clothes?"

"We has a bolt o' moleskin and a bolt o' kersey cloth," said Mrs. Twig. "I'll make the adikeys from that, and a pair o' moleskin trousers. We're a bit short o' underclothes. We gets Toby new ones this year, and I can mend up his old ones to do he for a bit until you goes to Deer Harbour, and Charley can wear the new ones."

"I'll wear the old ones," objected Charley. "Let Toby have the new ones. I have the suit I'm wearing, too."

"You have one of the new ones," suggested Toby by way of compromise, "and with the suit you has 'twill make two. I'll be havin' the other two suits of new uns, and we'll both be wearin' the old uns if we needs un till you gets new."

"All right, I'll go you on that," agreed Charley. "That's a good way to fix it. And when there's a chance to go to the store at Deer Harbour I'll get some new things there."

"We has some fine skins for boots," said Mrs. Twig. "I gets un all tanned in the spring, and I'll be makin' up some boots."

"Well, now! We're gettin' out o' that fix easy," and Skipper Zeb beamed delightedly. "We're gettin' out o' *that* fix! And has you

duffle for sox? And is there plenty o' deerskin on hand for moccasins?"

"Aye, plenty o' duffle and plenty of deerskins," smiled Mrs. Twig, amused at the Skipper's enthusiasm. "I'll soon be havin' a plenty o' sox and moccasins made up."

"The lynx fur the lads gets this evenin' not bein' prime for trade, but fine for caps, I thinks the lads might have caps made out of un, and the hoods of their adikeys trimmed with un," suggested Skipper Twig. "Then both our lads will be dressed alike."

"*'Twould* be fine, now," assented Mrs. Twig, who usually agreed with Skipper Zeb's suggestions.

"Now that's settled, and we has you lads togged out to the king's taste for winter." Skipper Zeb stroked his beard contentedly. "No fix there to bother, and we'll talk up our plans. First thing, Mother's been fussin' about the trap boat, and feelin' bad about un ever since we leaves un at the Duck's Head. She's thinkin' if we pulls un out o' the water, we'll find the bottom not so bad we can't fix un. I'm not doubtin' myself the bottom's all stove in, the way she struck. But we'll go over to the Duck's Head in the marnin' to pull she out and make sure of un, and 'twill

make Mother feel better if we tries, whatever."

"That's fine," agreed Toby. "I were thinkin' maybe she's just got a busted plank, and her timbers are sound."

"Now what does you think o' the plan, Charley?" asked Skipper Zeb. "You're one o' the partners, and must have a say about un."

"It sounds good to me," agreed Charley, feeling that responsibility was being thrust upon him, and rather pleased that it was. "I think the boat should be looked at."

"There, now, that's good judgment," boomed the Skipper. "I were sure you were a lad o' judgment from the minute I sees you, and that proves un. We'll go in the marnin' to the Duck's Head to see the trap boat, after you lads come back from your rabbit snares."

As Toby had planned, Charley and he shared the bed in the living-room, and so soundly did Charley sleep that Mrs. Twig had breakfast nearly ready before he awoke the following morning. They ate by candlelight, and at the first break of dawn the two boys set out eagerly to look at the rabbit snares, and within an hour returned with three big snowshoe rabbits.

Skipper Twig was ready with his boat, in which he had stowed block and fall rigging, hammer, nails, pieces of plank and an ax, and without delay the three were off for the Duck's Head.

With the block and fall they were able to haul the boat out of the water, and to their satisfaction, and the amazement of Skipper Zeb, discovered that no serious damage had been done. A plank had been broken, but ribs and timbers were uncracked. The boat was soon mended and the new section of plank caulked with oakum, and shortly after midday the trap boat was again afloat, and quite as serviceable as before the accident.

"There she be, fine and shipshape as ever!" Skipper Zeb boomed. "Mother were worryin' and stewin' herself half sick about she. That's the way 'tis with most worries, when you goes to the bottom of un. Nothin' to worry about. There's another fix we gets out of."

"Fine and dandy!" exclaimed Charley. "I was sure you'd lost her, and I'm so glad she's all right after all."

"Well, now," said Skipper Zeb, "this was once Mother was right when she pesters me to come and look at un. I thinks we'd lost

she sure, but I says, 'That's the way o' things,' and I don't worry. Though we'd have missed she at the fishin', we'd be gettin' on, and 'twasn't worth a worry, whatever."

There was great rejoicing when Skipper Zeb and the boys arrived at Double Up Cove early in the afternoon with the big trap boat, and the small boat in tow. Mrs. Twig and Violet saw them coming, and were at the beach to meet them, and Mrs. Twig actually shed tears of joy.

"Snug and tight as ever!" announced Skipper Zeb, as the prow touched the shore. "We gets she all fixed up, Mother. I'm thinkin' you knows more about boats than I does."

"I'm *so* glad!" and Mrs. Twig's round face was wreathed in smiles while glad tears glistened in her eyes. "Now you and the lads must be wonderful hungry, for 'tis near two hours after dinner time, and dinner's been waitin' this long while."

"Aye, hungry as seven bears and as happy and perky as a cock pa'tridge," boomed Skipper Zeb. "We'll make the boats fast, and be right up."

What an appetite Charley had! And when he learned that the delicious roast meat

was a cut of the lynx that he and Toby had killed the night before, his natural prejudice against unaccustomed food did not prevent him from taking a second helping.

Charley scarce had time to think of home. Skipper Zeb was quite aware that the best antidote for homesickness is work, with little time to ruminate, and he kept Charley busy from morning till night with himself and Toby doing the most interesting things imaginable, and, with all the other work, the boys visited their rabbit snares each day and set new ones. The week passed quickly, and on Saturday evening, when they sat down to supper, Skipper Zeb announced:

"Well, now, here 'tis time to go to the path and set up the traps. We'll be leavin' Monday marnin', lads."

This was an adventure to which Charley had looked forward with keen anticipation since Skipper Zeb had first announced that he and Toby were to accompany him. Reaching away for countless miles in every direction from the water's edge lay the vast primordial, boundless wilderness. What unfathomed mysteries it held! There it slept as it had slept through the silence of unnumbered ages since the world was formed, un-

trod by the white man's foot, known only to wild Indian hunters, as primitive as the wilderness itself. What strange beasts lived in its far fastnesses! What marvelous lakes, what great rivers, what mountain peaks waited there to be discovered! What a wonderful sensation it would be to penetrate the hem of its outer edge beyond the sight and reach of even Skipper Zeb's frontier cabin.

This was what Charley was thinking, as they talked of the going on Monday morning, though he could not, perhaps, have put his thoughts or emotions into words that would express them.

"'Tis a late start," Skipper Zeb continued. "I never goes in quite so late to set up my path. But I has two fine helpers, whatever, and I never has they before."

Everything was made ready on Sunday night, and a full two hours before daybreak on Monday morning Skipper Zeb's small boat was laden with a cargo of flour, pork, molasses, tea and steel traps, with extra clothing for the trail. Two pairs of snowshoes were taken for himself, in case of accident to one of them, and also a pair for Toby and a pair for Charley.

"'Tis never safe to go without snowshoes

at this season," explained Skipper Zeb. "If snow comes now, there'll be no gettin' about without un."

"I never had a pair of snowshoes on in my life," said Charley. "I don't see how you can walk with them, they're so wide and must be clumsy."

"Never has snowshoes on!" explained Skipper Zeb in astonishment. "Well, now! And how does you ever get about in winter without un?"

"The streets are kept clear of snow," explained Charley, "and we don't have so much snow anyhow. Even in the country there isn't enough snow to use them."

"Well, now!" said Skipper Zeb in wonderment. "It must be strange to be livin' in a place where you're not needin' snowshoes to get about in winter. You'll learn to use un. 'Twill be easy enough, once you finds the way o' swingin' your feet."

Mrs. Twig and Violet went down to the landing to see them off, and to wish them Godspeed as they pulled away with Skipper Zeb and Toby at the oars and Charley settled snugly in the stern.

X

SKIPPER ZEB'S TRAPPING PATH

THE stars shone brightly. The distant shore line stood out in dark silhouette marking the boundary of the land of silence, where no man lived. A thousand miles of trackless, unknown wilderness lay beyond that dark forest boundary. Charley's imagination pictured it as another world, apart and different from anything he had ever seen. Reared in a great city, it was difficult for him, even after his experience of the past week, to visualize it or form any accurate conception of what lay within its cold, rugged heart.

Listening to the ripple of water, watching the stars, Charley's thoughts turned from the dark shore line to the brighter home land. What had his father said when Mr. Wise returned without him? What would his mother say and feel when his father reached home alone? How grief-stricken they would be! Tears came into Charley's eyes, and remorse threatened to dampen the pleasure, and rob him of the ardour, of the adventure,

when Skipper Zeb, in his big, cheery voice, asked:

"Be you snug and warm back there, Charley, lad?"

"Yes, thank you." Charley's voice betrayed his thoughts, perhaps, for Skipper Zeb asked:

"Not sorry now that the ship left you, be you, lad?"

"N-n-o," hesitated Charley, "I'm having a great time, but I was thinking of Dad and Mother, and how badly they will feel."

"Don't be thinkin' o' that now. Think how glad you'll make they when you goes back." Skipper Zeb laughed heartily. "I'm just laughin' at the way they'll be takin' on *then!* They'll be just maulin' you to pieces, they'll be so glad! Think o' *that* now. Think o' the bad fix you gets out of, and thank the Lard you gets left at Pinch-In Tickle where you was as welcome as a son, instead of at some harbour where no one was bidin', as might o' happened. Just be thinkin' of to-day, and thank the Lard you're well and hearty, and has a snug berth with plenty o' grub. Nothin' to worry about! Not a thing!"

"May I have a pull at the oars?" Charley

asked, the gloom suddenly dispersed by Skipper Zeb's cheery voice and logical argument.

"Aye, lad, 'twill warm you up," agreed Skipper Zeb heartily. "Take Toby's oars. Let Charley have a pull at your oars, Toby, lad."

Charley soon wearied of the unaccustomed work, and blisters began to form in the palms of soft hands; and when Toby suggested it, he was glad enough to surrender the oars again to Toby, who minded it not a bit.

Daylight came and with it bright sunshine. Charley's heart beat with gladness and the joy of life. His far away city home seemed farther away than ever. He remembered it as one remembers a place of dreams—the subways, the elevated railways, the traffic-clogged streets, the high buildings, the noise. Here were no chimneys vomiting smoke and soot. Here were no dirty streets to poison the air with noxious fumes and germs of disease. He breathed deeply of the pure air bearing the sweet perfume of the forest and the refreshing smell of the salt sea. It filled his lungs like a life-giving tonic. How glorious this wild world was!

"Well, now!" Skipper Zeb announced an hour before midday. "Here's Swile Is-

land before we knows it! We'll stop for a bit to boil the kettle and stretch our legs ashore."

Swile Island was a small, nearly round island, containing an area equal to about that of a city block. Its center rose to a small hill, covered by a stunted growth of black spruce trees, which somehow clung to its rocky surface.

Charley was glad to go ashore, and he soon learned that "to boil the kettle" meant to prepare and eat luncheon. While Toby carried up from the boat the food and cooking utensils, Skipper Zeb lighted a fire, and in a little while the kettle was boiling for tea and a pan of salt pork sizzling over the coals.

Never in his life had Charley eaten fried salt pork, and Skipper Zeb's pork contained no streak of lean. He would have left the table without eating had such a meal been served him in his city home. But here he ate the pork, with his bread sopped into the grease, and tea sweetened with molasses, hungrily and with a relish, so quickly had exercise in the pure, clear air of the wilderness had its effect. Indeed, he was always hungry now, and could scarcely wait for meal time.

"There were lots of things I'd never eat at home," he said as he passed his plate for a second helping of pork, "but here I like everything."

"As I were sayin' before, hunger's a rare sauce for vittles," remarked Skipper Zeb.

A light breeze sprang up while they were eating, and when they made their departure from Swile Island Skipper Zeb hoisted a leg-o'-mutton sail, and then sat and smoked his pipe and told stories of experiences and adventures on the trail, while Toby took the rudder.

It was nearly three o'clock when Skipper Zeb pointed out a little log hut near the mouth of a small river, and announced:

"There's Black River and there's Black River tilt where we bides to-night."

A few minutes later the prow of the boat grounded upon a gravelly beach, and while Skipper Zeb unloaded the cargo the boys carried it to the tilt, laying it upon spruce boughs broken by Toby to protect it from the snow.

The tilt was built of logs, with a roof thatched with bark. The door was not more than four feet in height, and when Skipper Zeb opened it the three were compelled to

stoop low to enter. The interior was a room about eight by ten feet in size. Across the end opposite the door was a bunk, and, along the right side of the room as they entered, another bunk extended from that at the far end to the wall behind the door. On the left side of the room, and midway between the end bunk and the door was a sheet-iron tent stove, with a pipe dismantled and lying on top of it. An old pair of snowshoes, and steel traps, pieces of board shaped for stretching pelts of various sizes and some simple cooking utensils hung upon wooden pegs against the wall. The floor was of hard-packed earth.

"Well, now! Here we be safe and sound and ready for work!" boomed Skipper Zeb. "Everything snug and fine when we gets our beds made and the stove set up and a fire in she. Whilst you lads gets boughs for the beds, I'll be puttin' up the stove and stow the cargo inside."

Toby and Charley went to work with a will, and soon had deep springy beds laid upon the bunks. Upon the bunk at the farther end they spread Skipper Zeb's sleeping bag, and side by side, upon the other bunk, their own. Already Skipper Zeb had a

crackling fire in the stove and the cargo carried in and stowed snugly under the berths.

"Now whilst Toby and I tidy up a bit, put over the kettle, Charley lad, and we'll have a bite to eat," suggested Skipper Zeb.

Charley took the tin pail that served as a kettle, to fill it at the river. Just as he had dipped it and was about to return, his eye fell upon a peculiar looking animal perched upon a branch high up in a spruce tree. With all speed he ran back to the tilt and called excitedly upon Toby to come and see it.

"'Tis a porcupine!" exclaimed Toby, grabbing his rifle and following Charley. "I'll shoot he, and we'll have he for supper!"

And so it proved. A shot brought the animal tumbling down. Toby picked it up gingerly by a leg and carried it back.

"Well, now! Fresh meat the first night!" boomed Skipper Zeb. "Whilst you lads tidy the tilt, I'll skin he."

In a few minutes Skipper Zeb had the porcupine skinned and dressed, and after washing the meat in the river and cutting it into convenient sections he placed it in a kettle of water to stew for supper.

Two Indian flatsleds or toboggans, which were standing on end against the tilt, were put into repair by Skipper Zeb and made ready for the journey on the morrow, and before dark all preparations for an early departure were completed.

It was snug and cozy now in the tilt, with the fire in the little tent stove cracking and snapping. The air was spicy sweet with the odour of the spruce and balsam beds, but to the boys a still more delicious and appealing odour was given out by the kettle of stewing porcupine on the stove. Presently when supper was served Charley declared that the meal more than fulfilled his expectations.

"Why, it makes me think of lamb," he said, "only it's a heap better than any stewed lamb I ever ate. It's just great!"

"'Twere young and fat," said Skipper Zeb. "We likes porcupine wonderful well. 'Tis a fine treat *we* thinks."

Before daybreak the following morning loads were lashed upon the two flatsleds, and all was made ready for the trail. Snow was not deep enough to require the use of snowshoes, and they were tied securely upon the tops of the loads.

"All ready!" announced Skipper Zeb, in

his big hearty voice, as dawn was breaking. "I'll be goin' ahead with the heavy flatsled, and you lads takes turns haulin' the other. Toby b'y, you take the first turn at un."

"Aye," agreed Toby eagerly, "I'll haul un a spell first."

The route for a time followed the course of Black River. Now and again Skipper Zeb paused and turned aside to set a trap, where the tracks of martens or minks indicated their presence. At intervals he took bunches of a dozen or more traps from trees where he had hung them the previous spring when the trapping season had ended. Charley wondered how it was possible for him to remember where he had left them, and asked:

"How do you ever find the traps where you left them? The places all look alike to me."

"Why, 'tis easy enough, lad. This bunch I hangs in the only hackmatack tree handy about. I just looks up and sees the tree, and there I finds the traps just where I leaves un."

Even still Charley could not understand how Skipper Zeb could know where to look for the particular hackmatack tree, standing

alone among the spruces and quaking aspens, for at several points he saw lone hackmatacks in similar surroundings. Presently he was to learn that the woodsman by long practice learns to know every tree or bush that is even slightly out of the ordinary along his trail, and so trained is he in the art of observation that his subconscious mind records these with no effort on his part. Thus to the woodsman the trail over which he has traveled two or three times, and often but once, becomes as familiar to him as streets to the city dweller.

After two hours on the trail, Skipper Zeb announced that they would "boil the kettle," and have a "snack" to eat. Already the boys were ravenously hungry, and Skipper Zeb chuckled merrily as he observed their keen enjoyment as they ate.

"Settin' up traps makes for hunger," said he. "Fill up now."

"I was just hollow!" confessed Charley.

"And I was hungrier'n a starved wolf!" added Toby.

Their course now left the river valley, and presently came upon a wide frozen marsh, or "mesh" as Skipper Zeb called it.

"'Tis here on the meshes we finds the best fox footin'," he explained to Charley.

It was not long until he found tracks that he said were fox tracks, and in various places on the marsh set three traps, which were considerably larger than those set for marten or mink, and had two springs instead of one, and he used much greater care in setting them than in setting those for marten and mink. With his sheathknife he cut out a square of snow, and excavated in the snow a place large enough to accommodate the trap. Over the trap a thin crust of snow was placed, and so carefully fitted that its location was hardly discernible. In like manner the chain, which was attached to the root of a scrubby spruce tree, was also concealed. From a carefully wrapped package on his flatsled Skipper Zeb produced some ill-smelling meat, and this he scattered upon the snow over and around the trap.

"They likes meat that smells bad," he explained, "and I'm thinkin' that smells bad enough for un."

Evening was falling when suddenly through the forest there glinted the waters of a lake, and here on its shores Skipper Zeb told them they were to camp for the night. A home-made cotton tent, small but amply large enough for the three, was quickly

pitched and a tent stove set up. Then while Toby and Charley gathered boughs and laid the bed, Skipper Zeb cut a supply of wood for the night, and before the boys had finished the bed he was frying in the pan a delicious supper of partridges, which he and Toby had shot during the afternoon.

Charley was sure he had never been so tired in his life. It had been a long day of steady walking, save for the brief stops when Skipper Zeb halted to set a trap, and the snow and turns at hauling the flatsled had made it the harder. He lay back upon his sleeping bag chatting with Toby and watching Skipper Zeb prepare supper. How cozy and luxurious the tent was! The pleasant fragrance of spruce and balsam would have put him to sleep at once, had it not been for the pleasanter fragrance of the frying partridges and a hunger that increased with every minute.

When the meal was eaten Charley's eyes were so heavy that it was little short of torture to keep them open, and he slipped into his sleeping bag, and in an instant had fallen into dreamless, restful sleep.

How long he had been sleeping he did not know, when suddenly he found himself

awake and alert. Something had aroused him, and he sat up and listened. For a time he heard nothing, save the heavy breathing of Skipper Zeb and Toby, and he was about to lie down again when there came the sound of footsteps in the slightly crusted snow outside. Some animal was prowling cautiously about the tent sniffing at its side. The moon was shining, and suddenly he saw the shadowy outline, against the canvas, of a great beast that he knew to be a timber wolf.

He was about to reach over to Skipper Zeb to wake him, when all at once the stillness was broken by a terrifying, heartrending howl, rising and falling in mournful cadence, and echoing through the forest behind them. The howling creature was separated from Charley only by the thickness of the canvas, and Charley's blood ran cold.

XI

THE WORST FIX OF ALL

SKIPPER Zeb and Toby sat up hurriedly, and without an instant's hesitation Skipper Zeb slipped on his moccasins, reached for his rifle and left the tent. A moment later there came the report of his rifle.

The boys awaited eagerly his return, and when presently he reëntered the tent it was to report:

"'Twere an old she wolf, but I misses she. 'Twere just one alone. I'm thinkin' we may be findin' deer signs up the path. Wolves follow the deer."

"Will the wolf come back? And is it dangerous?" asked Charley, the terrifying echo of its howl still in his ears.

"We'll never see *she* again," said Skipper Zeb, settling in his sleeping bag to resume his interrupted rest. "That un won't be dangerous, whatever. If she keeps goin' as smart as she started she'll be over the height o' land by to-morrow night this time," and he

chuckled with the recollection of the frightened wolf's speed.

Farther and farther into the wilderness they went. It seemed to Charley that they had left the whole world behind them, and that the forest and barrens through which they trod had swallowed them up, and he wondered if they would ever be able to find their way back to Black River tilt and the boat. Had he been left alone he would not have known in which direction to turn.

The silence was total. There was never a sound to break it at night, and during the day none save the harsh voice of the Labrador jay, which came begging for food whenever they boiled the kettle, and was so fearless it would almost take crumbs from the hand; or the incessant dee-dee-dee of the chickadee, a much pleasanter companion of the trail, Charley thought, than the jay. Once, in the evening, they heard the honk of a flock of wild geese passing south.

"They're a bit late," observed Skipper Zeb. "They'll be bidin' in a pond a step to the west'ard from here, and feedin' in the marnin'. I gets geese there sometimes, and I'm thinkin' I'll take a look at break o' day and see if I can knock one or two of un over."

Accordingly, the following morning after they had eaten breakfast and just as dawn was breaking, he left the boys, and a half hour later returned with three fat geese.

"We'll cache un here," said he, "and when we comes back take un with us, and you lads can take un home."

On Wednesday night they had the shelter of a tilt, which Skipper Zeb called "Long Lake tilt," and on Friday evening they reached "Big Lake tilt" and the end of the trail.

"Here we stops till Monday," Skipper Zeb announced. "'Twill give you lads a chance to rest up."

"That's great! It's the longest and hardest hike I ever had," said Charley. "I'll tell Dad about it when I get home, and he'll think I could have stood the Newfoundland hike he wouldn't take me on. I'll bet it wasn't half as hard as this one!"

"You'll be gettin' as strong as a young bear, lad, and as toughened up as a wolvering before you leaves The Labrador," chuckled Skipper Zeb.

"Mother'll be scared when I tell her what I've done here," said Charley, "but Dad will be proud of it. They never thought I could

do *anything* hard, and never let me do anything much. They'll know now what I can do!"

"We never knows what we can do till we tries un," commented Skipper Zeb.

The following morning Skipper Zeb did not wake the boys, but left them to sleep while he slipped away alone to set traps in the forest and marshes along the lake shore. It was broad day when they awoke, and when they had eaten Toby suggested:

"We'll be goin' out with my rifle and try shootin' at a mark."

"May I shoot?" asked Charley eagerly. "I never shot a gun in my life and I'd like to learn!"

"'Tis easy," assured Toby. "I'll be showin' you how, and you'll be learnin' quick."

Before they left the tilt Toby instructed Charley in how to fill the magazine and how to manipulate the lever, impressing all the time upon his pupil the necessity of caution, and telling tales of two or three of his acquaintances who had been shot through the careless handling of firearms.

When Charley had learned the rudiments of gun handling to Toby's satisfaction, they

went a little way down the lake shore, and selecting a bank as a background, in order, Toby told Charley, that bullets that missed the mark might not go crashing through the forest, but would be buried in the earth, he fastened a small square of white birchbark upon a spruce tree, to serve as a target, and retired with Charley to a distance of about fifty yards from it.

"Now try a shot," Toby directed.

"How do you hold the rifle steady?" asked Charley who found the muzzle wabbling woefully.

Toby, with much patience, illustrated the method of placing the feet, the position in which to stand, how to hold the arm, and how to aim properly.

"Now don't pull un with a jerk. Hold your breath and squeeze the trigger hand together all at once, so she goes off almost without your knowin' when she goes."

Charley proved himself an apt pupil, and after a few shots rarely missed the target.

Skipper Zeb did not return to the tilt for dinner, and after the boys had eaten Toby suggested that they stroll up the lake shore in the hope that they might get a shot at some partridges.

"May I carry your rifle and try to shoot them if we see any?" asked Charley eagerly.

"Aye," agreed Toby, "'twill be fine for you to try un, now you knows how to shoot."

Charley took the rifle eagerly, and this time took the lead, as the hunter. They had walked but a short distance when Toby whispered:

"Drop quick!"

"What is it?" whispered Charley, as both dropped to the ground and Toby crawled up beside him.

"Deer!" whispered Toby. "See un! Right ahead!"

Then for the first time Charley saw a big caribou, nosing in the snow and feeding leisurely.

"What'll I do?" asked Charley.

"'Tis a fine shot!" answered Toby. "Be wonderful careful o' your aim, and shoot!"

Charley was all atremble as he brought the rifle to his shoulder for his first shot at any game. In spite of all he could do, the muzzle of the rifle would not behave, and before he was aware of it he pulled the trigger, and the shot went wild.

"Try un again! Try un again before he runs!" plead Toby.

Charley fired again and then again, but with no better success, and the caribou, now taking alarm, turned and disappeared into the forest.

"You misses that un," said Toby, not in the least perturbed, now that the caribou had gone. "'Tis hard to hit un the first time you tries."

"Oh, I'm so sorry!" and Charley could scarce control his voice in excitement and disappointment. "It was nearer than the target we shot at! How *could* I miss it?"

"You gets nervous the first time you tries, the way most folks does," soothed Toby. "Next time you'll get un."

It was Thursday evening of the following week when they again reached the tilt at Black River and the boat. Both boys were tired but happy, and Charley, who had shot his first partridge with Toby's rifle that morning, told Skipper Zeb that he had had the best time he ever had in all his life.

"That's the way to talk, lad! That's the way!" and Skipper Zeb slapped him on the shoulder, his characteristic method of expressing approval. "You has the makin's in you of a fine trapper and hunter. You fits yourself to what you has to meet and to

do, whether 'tis a bit hard or whether 'tis easy. 'Twere a long way for young legs that's not used to un. Bein' on the path settin' up traps is a wonderful sight different from bein' snug and warm with a good bed o' nights at home. You lads stands un like old hands at un."

"Thank you, Skipper," and Charley was proud, as was Toby, at the word of praise. Every one likes to be praised for an act well done, or done to the best of one's ability, and Skipper Zeb, who in a crude way was a student of human nature, and carried a gentle, affectionate heart in his bosom, never failed to speak a word of praise where it was deserved. He knew that a kindly word of appreciation for a deed well done, often proved an incentive to greater effort. A little flower handed to the living is better than a wreath placed upon the casket of the dead. Skipper Zeb gave his flowers of kindliness to those about him while they lived and could enjoy them.

"Now, lads," said Skipper Zeb when they had finished their evening meal, and he was puffing his pipe comfortably by the warm stove, "I has a line o' traps to set up to the east'ard of the tilt that I weren't settin' up

before we goes in, and two days' work to do about here whatever. We've been havin' a long spell o' fine weather like we mostly has before winter sets in hard. The wind is shiftin', and before to-morrow night, whatever, there'll be snow. Early in the marnin' I thinks you had better start back with the boat, and be gettin' snug at Double Up Cove before the snow comes."

"When'll you be gettin' home, Dad?" asked Toby.

"I'll be gettin' home the Saturday or Sunday before Christmas, whatever," promised Skipper Zeb, "and I'll be stayin' for a fortnight holiday when I comes."

"Won't you be home before then?" asked Charley in astonishment.

"No, I has to keep tendin' the traps once I sets un," explained Skipper Zeb. "'Tis the only way to get fur."

"I should think you'd get dreadfully lonesome on the trail alone," said Charley, "and we'll miss you."

"A busy man's not havin' time to get lonesome. 'Tis only idleness that makes for lonesomeness."

The sky was heavily clouded the following morning, and a brisk northeasterly

breeze, cold and raw, was blowing. Toby and Charley bade good-bye to Skipper Zeb, and hoisting the sail departed for Double Up Cove.

"The breeze'll be helpin' you now," shouted Skipper Zeb from the shore. "Make the most of un, and don't be takin' too much time to boil the kettle at Swile Island!"

"Aye," shouted Toby, "we'll be makin' the most of un."

Charley watched Skipper Zeb standing on the shore and looking longingly after them, and then turn back to his lonely work in the wilderness, and he, himself, felt suddenly very lonely.

With unexpected suddenness the wind rose to half a gale before they had spanned two-thirds of the distance to Swile Island. The boat shipped several seas, and while Charley bailed the water out, all of Toby's seamanship was required to keep her on her course, until at length, to their great relief, a landing was made on the lee side of the island.

"I was sure we'd be wrecked again!" exclaimed Charley when he and Toby, dripping wet, had hauled the prow of the boat upon the sloping rock of the island shore.

"'Twere a bit rough," admitted Toby. "We'll have to bide here till the wind goes down, and I'm thinkin' there'll be snow before we gets the kettle boiled."

"And we haven't any tent!" exclaimed Charley in consternation.

"We'll be makin' a lean-to with the sail," suggested Toby. "We'll not find un so bad. We'll make un before we boils the kettle."

The boat was unloaded, and under the lee of a big rock, where they were protected from the wind also by a grove of spruce trees, Toby selected two trees about seven feet apart, and five feet from the ground and lashed a pole from tree to tree. He then cut several poles, and arranged them evenly with one end resting upon the pole which he had lashed to the tree and the other end sloping back to the ground. To make the sloping poles secure and hold them in place, he laid another pole between the trees, and on top of the sloping poles, lashing this also firmly into place, and then placed a log over the ends of the poles on the ground to hold them in position.

With Charley's assistance he now spread the boat sail over the poles, and tied it into place. Then at each end of the lean-to he

and Charley placed a thick barricade of spruce brush. A floor of boughs finished and made comfortable the shelter, and a fire built against a rock in front of it, that the rock might serve as a reflector, soon made the lean-to warm and snug.

There was no abatement of wind, and snow was falling thickly before they had finished eating, and when they were through, Toby suggested:

"I'm thinkin' we'd better haul the boat up farther and turn she over."

"All right," agreed Charley, "let's do it now. It don't look as though we'd get off the island to-day."

"Not till the wind stops, whatever," said Toby. "We may have to bide here two or three days, *I'm* thinkin'."

This was a new adventure. Charley rather enjoyed the prospect of it, and Toby perhaps equally as well, and as they walked down to their landing place they chatted merrily about what they would do, when all at once both boys stopped and looked at each other aghast. The boat was not there!

"She's gone!" exclaimed Toby. "The tide were risin' up and floatin' she off!"

"What shall we do?" asked Charley in

dismay. "We can't get off the island without a boat!"

"'Tis a bad fix," confessed Toby. "They's no way o' gettin' off the island without the boat. I'm not knowin' rightly what to do. 'Tis the worst fix I *ever* were in!"

The snow was now falling heavily, driven in thick, swirling clouds by the gale. Everywhere they looked along the shore, in the vain hope that the boat may have drifted in at some other point, and eagerly they looked out into the drifting clouds of snow in the equally vain hope that it might be seen floating near enough to the shore to be recovered by some means. But nowhere was it to be seen, and the two boys, depressed by a sense of helplessness to extricate themselves from the small, isolated and nearly barren island that had so suddenly become their prison, turned back to the partial protection of their improvised shelter.

Disconsolate, they sat under the lean-to and talked over their dilemma while the snow beyond the fire grew thicker, and the wind shrieked and howled dismally through the trees.

"You thinks 'twere bad when the ship leaves you at Pinch-In Tickle," said Toby

finally, "but we're gettin' in a wonderful sight worse fix!"

"Yes," agreed Charley dejectedly, "of all that's happened, this is the worst fix of all."

"All we has to eat," continued Toby, "is half a loaf o' bread, a small bit o' pork and enough tea for one or two days, besides the three geese Dad were sendin' home to Mother."

"Perhaps we can get some game on the island?" suggested Charley.

"No," said Toby, "they's no game here. 'Tis too small an island."

"Is any one likely to come this way in a boat?" asked Charley hopefully.

"No," answered Toby discouragingly. "We're clost to the head o' the bay, and nobody ever comes here except Dad. We're sure in a wonderful bad fix, Charley."

XII

THE PANGS OF STARVATION

WHEN the first shock at the loss of their boat had passed, youthful buoyancy of spirit asserted itself, and the two castaways looked more hopefully upon their position. By eating lightly, Toby declared they could make a goose last them two days, and thus they had six days' rations of goose. The other food they would consider another day's rations. Thus, while they would not have as much to eat by any means as they might wish, they would do fairly well for a week.

"'Tis the comin' o' winter," prognosticated Toby. "'Tis gettin' frostier all the time, and when the storm clears 'twill settle down to steady freezin' day and night. If she does, the bay's like to fasten over soon, and then we'll be walkin' back to Double Up Cove on the ice, and couldn't use a boat if we had un."

"How long will it likely be before the bay freezes?" asked Charley anxiously.

"Soon as the wind stops and she calms down. After she begins freezin' she'll keep freezin' and ice is like to make fast," Toby explained. "The ice'll hold us in one or two days after she fastens, whatever, and there'll be fine footin' then to Double Up Cove."

"Then we're not likely to be here very long, and that's a comfort," said Charley, much relieved.

"Not so long, I'm thinkin'," agreed Toby.

There was a good deal of driftwood on the island shores, and dead wood scattered over the island, and upon Toby's suggestion they carried a quantity of this to the lean-to, and piled it at one side of the big boulder against which the fire was built. A huge pile was collected to serve as a reserve supply of fuel, that they might have a-plenty on hand to serve their needs, should the storm continue for two or three days, as Toby predicted it would, in which case the dead wood scattered over the island might be buried so deeply beneath the snow that they could not reach it.

When Toby deemed the supply of dead wood sufficient, even in case of a greater emergency than he anticipated, he felled

some green trees, trimmed the branches from the trunks, and cut the logs into convenient lengths for use upon the fire, and these Charley carried to the lean-to and piled at the opposite side of the boulder, that either dry or green wood might be had as desired.

"The green wood's slow to get started," said Toby, "but 'twill burn longer and keeps a fire longer."

Toby's judgment in collecting a reserve supply of fuel proved sound. Before night came a sudden and decided increase in the fall of snow rendered it unsafe to move a score of feet from the shelter, and the boys were thankful for the foresight that had led them to provide for the emergency.

Comfort and luxury are measured by contrast and comparison. The mail boat had seemed to Charley bleak and uncomfortable as compared to the luxurious home he had just left. The cabin at Pinch-In Tickle had appealed to him as a crude and miserable shelter in contrast to the mail boat, and he had wondered how the Twigs could exist in a place so barren of what he had always looked upon as the most necessary conveniences. But after his experience on the trap boat, and the retreat from the Duck's Head

camp, the Twig home, at Double Up Cove, in all its simplicity, was accepted by him as possessing every necessary comfort. Now, in contrast to the buffeting snow and wind which he and Toby had been fighting all day, even the rough lean-to assumed a cozy atmosphere, the fire before it blazing cheerily, and the boulder against which the fire was built reflecting the heat to the farthest corner.

"I never thought a place like this could be so snug," said Charley, when they had plucked and dressed one of the geese, and after disjointing it with his sheathknife Toby had put it over the fire to boil in the kettle, and the two boys lay upon their bough bed basking in the warmth and sniffing the appetizing odour sent forth from the kettle, while beyond the fire the snow drifted and the wind whistled.

"'Tis snug now," agreed Toby. "'Tis an easy way o' makin' a place to bide in when they's no tent."

"Your father always says not to worry," said Charley reflectively. "I know he's right, and it never helps a fellow any to worry. I'm not going to worry again. I'm sure the ice will come in time to get us out of here. When we found the boat was gone

I *was* worried though! I'm almost glad now we got caught here. When I get home and tell Dad about it he'll think it was just great!"

"No, as Dad says, 'twill do no good to worry, because worry unsets the insides of our heads and then that upsets our other insides and we gets sick," commented Toby. "We're about as well off without the boat as we would be with un. 'Tis lookin' to me like the start of winter, and if 'tis, I'm thinkin' the bay'll fasten over by the time the storm's over and before we could be gettin' away with the boat if we had un, and we'd be havin' to walk whatever."

"Do you mean walk on the ice when it comes?" asked Charley anxiously. "Won't that take a good while? We won't starve before then, will we?"

"We may be havin' some hungry days, but we'll not be starvin'," suggested Toby. "Indians has hungry spells when they don't get deer sometimes, and if Indians can stand un we can."

"Yes," Charley boasted, "if the Indians can stand it we can."

It was long after dark, and the evening well advanced, when they ate a most satisfy-

ing supper of boiled goose. After they had eaten Toby cut a supply of dry shavings and kindling wood from the hearts of dead sticks, which he split, and stowed the shavings and kindling wood behind their sleeping bags where the snow could not reach them to wet them, and they would be ready for instant use in the morning. Then he piled an extra supply of dry wood upon the fire, and upon this placed two of the green logs, remarking:

"The green wood'll not be goin' out so quick when she gets goin', and the coals are like to keep the fireplace free o' snow longer if she drifts in whilst we sleeps."

Never had Charley experienced such a storm. The weather had suddenly grown intensely cold, as he discovered when he stepped beyond the fire's glow. Now, snuggling down into his sleeping bag, it seemed to him that all the forces of nature had broken loose in their wildest fury. Above the shriek of wind was heard the dull thud of pounding seas upon the rocks, and the hiss of driving snow, combining to fill the air with a tumult little less than terrifying.

Once, in concern, he spoke to Toby, but there was no response, and he knew that Toby was asleep. For a time he lay awake

and listened to the roar of the storm and the thunder of the seas, and then, wearied with the day's labours and adventures, the shriek of wind and hiss of snow and roar of pounding seas blended into blissful unconsciousness, and he slept as peacefully as he would have slept in his bed at Double Up Cove.

When the young adventurers awoke the next morning, there was no abatement in the storm. A huge drift covered the boulder and the place where their fire had been, and nearly enclosed the front of the lean-to; and before they could lay a fire, a half hour's hard work was necessary to clear the snow away, each using a snowshoe in lieu of a shovel.

Then Toby lighted a fire, and soon the lean-to was warm again, and the kettle boiling merrily, and they ate a light breakfast of goose, a little of the remaining bread, and one cup each of weak tea sweetened with molasses.

"We'll have to be a bit careful o' the grub," advised Toby, "and not eat all we wants. There's no tellin' how long 'twill be before the bay freezes over. I'm thinkin' if we eats only twice a day 'twill be best."

"That's good sense," agreed Charley.

"We'll not be doing anything but waiting here, and we'll have to make two meals do us."

For four days and four nights the blizzard raged without abatement, and when the sky cleared on the fifth day, a new intense cold had settled upon the world. When the boys were able again to venture forth, they discovered that while the smooth rocks of the island had been swept clear of snow by the wind, huge drifts had formed against every obstructing boulder, and among the trees the snow lay a full four feet deep.

"It's a good time for me to learn to use snowshoes," suggested Charley. "I'm going to put them on and try them."

"'Tis, now," agreed Toby. "Get un out, and we'll see how you likes un."

Toby adjusted the slings for Charley, and then donning his own the two set out in the deep snow on the center of the island. At the beginning Charley stumbled, and falling in the snow could not get upon his feet without Toby's assistance; but in a little while he discovered that he could swing along at a good pace, and Toby pronounced him an "easy larner."

"I'm thinkin' Dad's at Black River tilt

yet," said Toby when the snowshoe lesson was finished and they had returned to their fire. "He'll be havin' a wonderful bad time settin' up his path again. The marten traps'll be above the snow, settin' on trees, but the mink and fox traps'll be deep enough under."

"Our snares will all be covered up," suggested Charley. "We'll never find them."

"We'll never dig *they* out, whatever," agreed Toby. "When we gets home we'll be settin' new ones."

"It seems to me it must be cold enough to freeze the bay," said Charley wistfully. "We haven't much goose left, and if it doesn't freeze soon we'll not have any left."

"'*Tis* cold enough," said Toby, "but the sea'll have to calm down before she freezes. We'll have to bide here three or four days more, *what*ever."

Two days later they ate the last of the goose, and that night went to their sleeping bags with no breakfast in view for the following morning. Still the waters of the bay gave no promise of freezing when they awoke. Heavy seas were breaking in from the eastward, though for three days the sky had been clear.

With scant meals the boys had been hungry for several days, and now with nothing to eat they became ravenous. They could talk of little else than the good things they would have to eat when they were safely back at the cabin at Double Up Cove, and the possibility of the early freezing of the bay. Every little while during the day they wandered out along the shore in the hope that they might discover that the sea was calming, only to return each time with little to encourage them.

"I'm as hollow as a drum," Charley declared when night came and they had settled in their sleeping bags. "I don't see how I can stand it another day. Isn't there something we can find to eat?"

"I'm wonderful hungry too," admitted Toby. "I'm as empty as a flour barrel that's been scraped, and I'm not knowin' anything we could find to eat, with snow on the ground. If the ground were clear we might be findin' berries, though I'm doubtin' there's many on Swile Island. But if there are, they're under the snow and they'll have to bide there, for we never could be findin' they."

"It seems to me I can't sleep without

something to eat," Charley complained. "I just can't stand it much longer, that's all."

"Try gettin' asleep," counseled Toby, "and when you gets asleep you'll be forgettin' about bein' hungry."

Charley did get to sleep readily enough, but it was only to dream that he was hungry, and always in his dreams he was about to get food, but something happened to keep it from him.

Two more days passed, and still the boys were without food. No one can know but one who has starved the degree of their hunger and craving for food during this period. Nothing that might have served as food would have been rejected by them or have been repugnant to them, but no morsel could they find. It was on the morning of the third day of their famine, when hunger pangs were the keenest, that Toby announced:

"I been prayin' the Lard to send the ice, and telling He how we wants to get away from here but don't know how until ice comes. Has you been prayin', Charley?"

"No," confessed Charley, "I've been growling around about our hard luck and about being hungry. All I know is the

Lord's prayer anyhow. I never was taught to pray out of my head. How do you do it?"

"Just talk to the Lard like you talks to anybody," said Toby in astonishment. "Ask He what you wants He to give you or wants He to do, just like you asks your Dad."

"You pray for both of us," suggested Charley. "Do it aloud so that I can hear it, and I'll say it over to myself, and maybe that will help. Don't forget to tell Him how hungry we are."

"I'm not doubtin' 'twould help," agreed Toby. "We'll be takin' off our caps. 'Twill be more respectful. Mr. Stuart at the Hudson's Bay Post makes us take off our caps when we talks to he and asks he anything."

"Yes, and we'd better get on our knees too," suggested Charley.

"Aye, 'twould be respectful," Toby agreed. "Dad says 'tis fine to kneel when 'tis so we can, though if we can't, to pray standin' up or rowin' a boat, or any way that's handiest."

Taking off their caps and kneeling upon their sleeping bags under the lean-to, and bowing their heads reverently, Toby prayed:

"Charley and I are wonderful hungry,

Lard. We been bidin' here on this island, which we calls Swile Island, goin' on ten days. We only has two meals a day till day before yesterday, and since then we has nothin' and to-day we has nothin'. Please, Lard, calm the sea and let the bay fasten over so 'twill be right to walk on, and we'll be goin' to Double Up Cove where our home is. You know all about it, Lard. We been doin' our best, Lard, and we don't know anything more to do. We're in a wonderful bad fix, and we needs help to get out of un. We're wantin' somethin' to eat, Lard, and we'll be wonderful thankful for un. Amen."

The boys sat down and resumed their caps, and in a moment Charley said:

"That was a bang up prayer, Toby. I couldn't have thought of a thing to say, except that I was hungry, but you thought of everything."

That evening Toby announced that the sea was calmer, but still too rough to freeze, and the next morning that the water was much "steadier," though yet not enough to freeze.

"If she keeps on steadyin' down I'm thinkin' by to-morrow marnin' she'll begin to fasten."

"I'm not half so hungry as I was," said

Charley, "but I'll be just as glad to get away from here."

"That's the way I hears the Indians say 'tis," said Toby, "and that's the way 'tis with me. I wants to eat, but I'm not hankerin' after un the way I was first."

Another morning brought a calm, though still unfrozen, sea. The boys were early by the shore to scan eagerly the waters.

"She's smokin'!" exclaimed Toby. "She's smokin'! 'Tis a sure sign!"

"What do you mean?" asked Charley excitedly. "Do you mean that haze that hangs over the water?"

"Aye," explained Toby, "'tis what we calls the sea smoke."

But this time the sign failed, and another morning dawned with the sea still free from its wintry shackles. A gentle swell, but quite enough to prevent the hoped for freezing, was rolling in, and the boys, quite discouraged, returned to their fire.

"We can't stand it much longer," declared Charley, making no effort to conceal his discouragement. "I'm getting so weak I don't believe I can ever walk to Double Up Cove, even if it does freeze. I'm weak and I'm sleepy all the time. We've been days without

eating, and even when it does freeze you say we'll have to wait a day or two before the ice outside will be strong enough to bear our weight."

"Don't be talkin' that way now," counseled Toby. "We were prayin' the Lard, and He'll fix un for us. Keep a stout heart. We'll not be givin' up hopes for another week, *what*ever."

"The Lord don't seem to be answering our prayer," retorted Charley.

And Toby, though he hid his thoughts within his breast, realized, even better than did Charley, that their position was now desperate, and that with another day or two without food they might become too weak to make the journey to Double Up Cove. Even were the bay to freeze that very night, at least two days must elapse before the water at a distance from shore would be hard enough frozen to bear their weight, and permit them to cross to the mainland.

XIII

THE GREAT SNOWY OWL

THE cold had become intense, and in their starving condition Charley and Toby felt it perhaps the more keenly. With the disappointment of another morning dawning and still no sign of the longed-for ice, Charley, after making his declaration of discouragement and hopelessness to Toby, became quiet and morose. He had no inclination to leave the tent and the fire, and he spent his time sitting under the shelter and brooding over his troubles.

Toby, no less anxious, made frequent journeys along the shore. On each return he would endeavour to engage Charley in conversation, but without result. Charley's replies to questions were "yes" or "no," unless a statement was necessary, and then it was given in as few words as possible. He appeared to have suddenly developed a grudge against Toby, as though Toby were responsible for their unfortunate position, and at length would not respond to Toby's efforts at conversation, or reply to him.

This was an attitude that Toby could not in the least understand, and he finally, when Charley in silence crawled into his sleeping bag, left the lean-to, doubly depressed because of Charley's bearing toward him, and set out again to reconnoiter the island.

"'Tis not me he's angry with," he soliloquized, "'tis the hunger, and 'tis gettin' the insides of his head sick, like Dad says worry will."

Toby wandered aimlessly along the shore rocks. He was weak, and walking was becoming an effort. For two or three days he and Charley had noticed that when they sat down their knees would unexpectedly give way to let them down with a shock upon their seat; and when they arose, they were compelled to stand for a moment to steady themselves lest they would stagger. Toby's usually brisk walk was now a lounging gait, like that of one grown old.

He had more than half circled the island, and was returning to the lean-to, when his eye fell upon something white, perched in a spruce tree which stood apart from the other trees. He stepped nearer, and his heart leaped with joy. The object was a great snowy owl.

With the best haste he could make he hurried back to the lean-to. Charley was asleep in his bag, and without arousing him Toby secured his rifle, and returned with renewed haste and vigour to the tree.

There still sat the owl taking its daytime rest, and quite unconscious of impending danger. With greater care than he had ever taken before, Toby aimed, fired, and the owl came tumbling to the snow below.

As though fearful that it might still escape from him, Toby sprang upon the dead bird like a ravenous wolf. Tears of joy came into his eyes as he held it up and stroked its feathers, and hugged it close to his breast. This would save his own and Charley's life, and how glad Charley would be!

How he ran back to the lean-to! How he shouted to Charley as he approached! How the two boys, their eyes wet with tears, stroked the thing for a moment before plucking it! these were events that neither ever forgot while he lived.

"The Lard sent un to us! The Good Lard sent un!" declared Toby.

"The Lord surely sent it to save us!" said Charley devoutly. "Toby, I've been a cad. I was so selfish that I was thinking that noth-

ing mattered but my having to stay here, and I guess I was blaming you for it. I don't know why, for you didn't make the storm that stranded us here. Anyhow, I acted a cad, and I want to tell you how sorry I am."

"'Tweren't your fault," soothed Toby. "Don't think of un. 'Twere like Dad says, you got to worryin' and worry were makin' the insides of your head upsot."

"Your father always says not to worry, but the Lord will help us out of any fix, if we do our best first," said Charley. "He's right. Isn't it just great, Toby, that you saw it and shot it! I feel like yelling, I feel so happy!"

"Just get out and yell all you wants to," grinned Toby. "We'll have one good feed, whatever."

In remarkably short time the owl was plucked, dressed and boiling merrily over the fire in a kettle that was becoming rusty from disuse.

"We'll be eatin' the broth first, and then the meat a bit at a time, and often," suggested Toby. "The Indians says if they eats too much when they first gets un after starvin' 'tis like to make un sick. Sometimes they gets wonderful sick, too."

"Then we'll be careful," agreed Charley, "though it's mighty hard not to pitch right in. I feel as though I could eat it all and then want more."

"So does I," grinned Toby, "and I'm not doubtin' you could eat un all, and I knows 'twould be easy for me to eat un."

How delicious the broth tasted, unsalted and unseasoned as it was! And when they drank it all, and temptation got the better of them and they each ate a small portion of the meat.

"'Tis growing calmer on the water," Toby announced when he had covered the kettle and hidden its contents from their hungry eyes. "I sees un when I'm out and sees the owl in the tree. The water's smokin' just fine now. Come and have a look, Charley."

"All right," said Charley reluctantly rising, though cheerfully. "If I stay here by the kettle, I'll not be able to leave the meat alone, and one of us mustn't have any more of it than the other."

Down on the sunny side of the island Charley all at once clutched Toby's arm.

"What's that?" he whispered excitedly, pointing to a dark object lying upon the rocks just above the water's edge.

XIV

THE BAY FASTENS

"DOWN!" whispered Toby. "Keep down where you is! Don't move! 'Tis a swile!"

Charley lay prone upon the snow, scarcely daring to move, and Toby was gone in a twinkling, moving as silently as a fox. It seemed an age that Charley lay there before he discovered Toby edging, rifle in hand, to a rock behind which he might have good vantage ground for a shot.

Charley, tense with excitement lest the seal might take alarm, watched Toby's every movement as he wormed himself forward, then lay still, then wormed forward again little by little. On his success might depend their lives, and Charley realized it fully. The owl would not last long, and would not go far to renew their wasted strength. The ice had not yet formed upon the bay, and still many days might pass before it would form.

At last Toby reached the rock, and Charley held his breath as Toby slowly and deliberately adjusted the rifle at his shoulder and

aimed. Then the rifle rang out as music to Charley's ears. The seal gave a spasmodic lurch toward the water, and then lay still. Toby's aim had been sure, and the bullet had reached its mark in the head, the one point where it would deal quick and certain death to the seal.

Both boys ran to their game, and fairly shouted with the joy of success. They touched it with their moccasined toes, and felt it with their hands.

"'Tis a dotar,"[1] said Toby. "Now we has plenty to eat till the bay fastens over."

"The Lord is *surely* helping us!" declared Charley devoutly. "Just when I gave up all hope of ever getting away from this island you shot the owl, and now we've got the seal!"

"Let's thank the Lard," suggested Toby. "Dad says 'tis a fine thing to thank He for what He's givin' us, and tryin' to be doin' somethin' for *He* sometimes, and not be always just askin' He for somethin' and takin' what He's givin' us without ever lettin' He know how much we likes un."

"You thank Him, Toby. I don't know just how to do it," admitted Charley. "Dad

[1] Old harbour seal.

never says blessing or gives thanks at the table the way your father does."

"I'll thank He," agreed Toby. "We'll be gettin' on our knees."

The two boys knelt.

"Lard, Charley and I be wonderful thankful for the owl and the swile You sends us. And we'll be tryin' to think o' things to do for You, and we has a chanst. Amen."

"That makes me feel better," Charley confessed. "Now what shall we do with the seal?"

"I'll be gettin' a rope, and we'll haul he over to camp."

"I'll stay here and watch it till you come back," Charley volunteered.

"I'll be comin' right back, and the swile'll not be runnin' away," grinned Toby.

"I know it," Charley laughed, "but I just want to enjoy looking at it."

When Toby was gone, Charley stroked the seal caressingly. He was sure now that all of their worries were at an end. His heart was light again, and he stood up and looked out over the smoking waters, and breathed deeply of the frosty air. How lovely the world was! How glorious it was just to live! What an Odyssey of adventures he would

have to relate when he reached home! And still, he mused, as wonderful as these adventures appeared to him they were a part of the routine of life in the country, and not one of them unusual. Toby looked upon them as a part of the day's work, and experiences that were to be expected.

Lost in retrospection, Charley was surprised by Toby's return with the rope much sooner than he had expected him. The rope was fastened to the seal, and the two boys, their hearts light with the certainty of food to sustain them and end their long fast, hauled the carcass back to their bivouac.

It was not easy to be abstemious in their eating. The broth from the owl had aroused the full vigour of the appetite of both boys, which had to some extent become dormant with long fasting. But they heeded the warning Toby had borrowed from the Indians, and practicing self-denial ate sparingly, though often.

Toby busied himself at once in removing the seal's entrails, before the carcass could freeze, and this he did without skinning it, explaining to Charley that if the ice formed before they had eaten the flesh, as he expected it would, they could haul it home over

the ice, at the end of the rope, much more easily than they could carry the dismembered joints. Extracting the liver, and laying it back under the lean-to on a piece of bark, Toby remarked:

"We'll be eatin' the liver fried in a bit o' seal fat for breakfast. If we just eats the owl to-day, I'm thinkin' by marnin' we can stand the liver, or a piece of un. 'Tis stronger meat than the owl. After the liver's gone, we'll be tryin' the flippers."

"All right," agreed Charley, happily. "Anything you say goes with me. I'm going to have a good time here now until we get away."

"So'll I," said Toby, "and we'll not be startin' till the ice is strong enough, whatever, so's not to be takin' any risk o' breakin' through. 'Tis never as thick outside as 'tis near shore."

When they awoke the next morning, a new and strange silence had fallen upon the world. Toby sat up excitedly, and shaking Charley into wakefulness, asked:

"Does you hear un? Does you hear un?"

"Hear what?" asked Charley, sleepily. "I don't hear a thing."

"Hear the stillness!" explained Toby.

"The water's not lappin'! The bay has fastened over! By to-morrow, whatever, we'll be leavin' here for Double Up Cove!"

"Hurrah!" shouted Charley, now thoroughly awake. "Isn't it great, Toby! We'll start to-morrow, and to-morrow night we'll be at good old Double Up Cove again! Hurrah!"

Charley "heard" the silence, the impressive, gravelike silence that had fallen upon the world. No longer was there a lapping of waters upon the rocks. No breath of wind murmured through the trees. There was a silence so complete, so absolute that Charley declared he could actually hear it.

The boys hurried down to the shore to scan the bay, and sure enough it lay gray and still under a coating of smooth, dark ice. Toby tried it with a stick, and already it was tough enough to bear his weight near shore.

"I'm doubtin' 'tis fast out in the middle yet," said Toby, "but she'll be freezin' all day, and she'll be fast enough all over by to-morrow, whatever."

It was a busy day of preparation and excitement. On the morrow they were surely to be relieved from their island prison and from an experience that had been most try-

ing and that they would both remember while they lived. All of the boat gear that they had brought ashore and other equipment and belongings were gathered together in a pile.

"'Tisn't much," said Toby, "but 'twould make for weariness to pack un on our backs. I'm thinkin' I'll fix up a riggin' to haul un. 'Twill be easier than packin'."

He proceeded to lay two of the long boat oars parallel upon the snow, and about eighteen inches apart. The blade end of the oars he connected with half a dozen sticks, the end of the sticks lashed firmly to the oars. The handle end of the oars he connected with a piece of rope, drawn taut, and securely tied to the handles.

"Now stand betwixt the handles, Charley, and lift un up so's the rope'll be against your chest," Toby directed.

Charley complied, and Toby tied another piece of rope to the end of one of the oars, and where the chest rope was tied to it. Then passing the rope up and in front of the shoulder, then behind the neck and down in front of the other shoulder, he secured the loose end to the other oar.

"There, now," said Toby, surveying his

work, "she'll ride on the ice and she's right for easy haulin'. The rope up around the back o' your neck holds she so you won't have to be holdin' she up with your hands, and you can have un free, and the rope across your chest fixes un so's you can haul by just walkin'."

"Am I going to haul this rig?" asked Charley.

"We'll be takin' turns at she and the seal," said Toby. "You'll be haulin' the one you likes to haul best, and I'll be haulin' the other. But I thinks this un'll be easier to haul than the seal. She'll be slippin' over the ice wonderful easy. We'll be lashin' the outfit on the sticks across the oar blades on the other end. 'Twill be light. We hasn't much of un to take. We'll cache the other pair of oars here for Dad to pick up next year when he's comin' up with the boat."

"All right," agreed Charley. "This rig will be dead easy to walk with on the ice, and I think I'll take it and let you drag the seal, if you don't mind."

"I'll be goin' ahead with the seal, if you likes the rig," planned Toby, "and I'll take a stick to try the ice, so we'll be keepin' abroad from any bad ice."

"You're wonderful, Toby!" exclaimed Charley admiringly. "I never would have thought of fixing up a rig like this."

"'Twill be easier'n packin' the outfit on our backs," remarked Toby.

Under ordinary conditions Charley would have found the fishy flavour of the seal's liver, and the still more highly flavoured flippers objectionable, if not offensive, to his taste. But now he pronounced them delectable, and his revived appetite found no grounds for complaint or criticism. During the day they consumed the liver, and for the evening meal a pair of flippers.

With the skin still in place that it might protect the meat and carcass of the seal in dragging it over the ice, Toby cut some liberal slices of meat in preparation for the frying pan in the morning, that there might be no delay. He also prepared an extra portion for the next day's luncheon, which he said they could eat cold.

Before they retired to their sleeping bags, Toby again led the way to the ice, and tried it with his ax. It was fully two inches thick.

"She's fine and tough, and she's makin' for thickness fast," Toby announced delightedly. "She'll be twice as thick by



SKIPPER ZEB'S OAR BROKE, AND THE BOAT WAS DRIVEN UPON A ROCK.

marnin', whatever! She'd hold us now! Salt water ice is a wonderful sight tougher'n fresh water ice."

That night, snug in his sleeping bag, Charley recalled the many adventures that had befallen him since his arrival at Pinch-In Tickle nearly a month before. One peril after another had beset him, and now, the worst of all, threatened starvation upon this desolate island, was about to end, and he thanked God silently for his deliverance.

To the dwellers in that far, silent land adventures are an incident in the game of life, and their existence is truly a man's game fashioned for the sturdy of soul and strong of heart. Everywhere in that bleak country adventure lurks, ever ready to spring upon the unwary. In the mysterious and dark depths of the broad forests, in the open wastes of the bleak barrens, in the breath of the sea winds it is met suddenly and unexpectedly. And soon enough Charley was to meet it again in a struggle for his very life, as we shall see.

XV

LOST IN THE BARRENS

WINTER, the monarch of the North, had returned to his throne to rule his kingdom with relentless hand. Never had Charley experienced such cold as that which met him when he and Toby left their sleeping bags the next morning. The air was marvelously clear and transparent. The stars shone with unusual brilliancy, and seemed very near the earth. Frost prisms on the snow sparkled and glinted in the starlight.

"Our skin boots'll be freezin' stiff as sticks," remarked Toby. "'Tis time for deerskin moccasins, for the snow'll not be softenin' again. They'll be steady freezin' all day, and *I* thinks steady freezin' now till the end o' winter."

"Oh, boy, but it's cold!" shivered Charley, as he hurriedly drew on his duffle socks and skin boots.

"Wonderful frosty!" said Toby, as he lighted the fire. "There's no doubtin' the

ice'll be stout enough to hold us now, whatever, and she'll be makin' thicker all day."

In a few minutes the fire was crackling and snapping cheerily, and the boys drew close to its genial warmth. A kettle of ice was put over to melt for water, and some slices of seal meat to fry in the pan.

They were eager to gain release from their island prison, and when their meal was eaten Toby hurriedly lashed their few belongings, including the boat sail, which had served so well as a shelter, upon the improvised travois, for Charley to drag behind him. A rope had been attached to the now hard-frozen seal the evening before. Snow was thrown upon the fire to put it out, that there might be no danger of a breeze scattering the embers among the trees, which covered the center of the island with a scant growth, and burning them. Then, with cheerful hearts and eager feet they turned down upon the ice and set forth on their way to Double Up Cove at last.

Toby, carrying a staff with which to try the ice ahead, and with the seal in tow, took the lead, while Charley, with the travois followed. How good it was to be away! How glorious the ice and the starlit morning!

The surface of the bay, smooth and firm, proved much more solidly frozen than Toby had expected to find it, and in a little while, when they had passed the center of ice lying between the island and the mainland, he discarded his staff as an unnecessary burden.

"She don't bend anywhere," he said delightedly. "We'll not be needin' to try she now. Past the middle 'tis sure to be tough and thick. We'll be headin' now for shore, and be keepin' clost inshore where there'll sure be no bad ice whatever."

"Isn't it glorious!" Charley exploded in exuberance. "I feel like dancing a jig! Whoopla! Toby, let's yell!"

And together the boys gave a yell that made the forest on the near-by shore echo.

"Oh, but it's great!" exclaimed Charley a little later. "I'm glad there's no snow on the ice. This rig I'm harnessed in wouldn't drag half so easily if there was snow. I don't mind it a little bit. I hardly feel the difference, it slides so well. How long will it take us?"

"With the early start, we'll be getting there a bit after dinner, and we may make un by dinner. We were startin' two hours before daylight, whatever."

The travois continued to prove no appreciable burden to Charley, as Toby had feared it would. The clear frosty air was an inspiration to fast walking, and indeed it was necessary for the boys to walk fast in order that they might keep the blood in circulation and comfortably warm. His experience on the trail with Skipper Zeb had toughened Charley's muscles, and improved his powers of endurance greatly, and he had no difficulty in keeping the quite rapid pace that Toby made.

They had been a full two hours on the trail when daylight came, and presently the sun peeped over the eastern horizon. In the flood of glorious sunshine that suddenly bathed the world, every shrub and bush that lined the shore, thickly coated with hoar-frost and rime, sparkled and glinted as though encrusted with burnished silver set with countless diamonds.

"How wonderful!" exclaimed Charley. "Isn't it great, Toby! I never saw anything like it!"

"Aye, 'tis wonderful fine," said Toby.

Even in the full rays of sunshine the snow along shore did not soften, and the ice kept dry. Charley declared that it was no

warmer at midday than it had been in the early morning.

It was nearly one o'clock when they rounded the point above Double Up Cove, and the cabin fell into view. Smoke was curling upward from the stovepipe which protruded above the roof. How cozy and hospitable it looked! Both boys gave exclamations of pleasure, and with one accord broke into a trot.

Mrs. Twig and Violet saw them coming, and putting on the kettle hurried outside to greet them, and what a welcome they received!

"Set down now, lads, by the stove whilst I gets you something to eat, and sets a pot o' tea to brew," admonished Mrs. Twig. "You must be rare hungry, and 'tis wonderful frosty."

While the boys ate a hastily prepared luncheon of bread and molasses and drank hot tea they related their experiences, interrupted by Mrs. Twig, who was cooking a substantial dinner of stewed rabbit, with frequent exclamations of concern or sympathy.

"Vi'let and I were worryin' and worryin' about you lads, when the storm comes," con-

fessed Mrs. Twig. "We were fearin' you'd be comin' in the boat. I'm wonderful thankful you gets home safe!"

The borrowed garments that Charley had been wearing were now discarded for new, and sealskin boots were now replaced by buckskin moccasins and moleskin leggings.

During their absence Mrs. Twig had made for Charley an adikey of white woolen kersey, and another to wear over it of white moleskin cloth, the hood of the latter trimmed with lynx fur. The former was for warmth, and the latter to break the wind and to shed snow readily. She had also made him moleskin trousers and leggings, and a fur cap for each of the boys. The caps were made from the pelt of the lynx that they had shot on that memorable evening when they first set their rabbit snares. There were new buckskin moccasins for Charley, with socks of heavy blanket duffle to wear inside the moccasins; and buckskin mittens, with inner mittens of duffle that would keep the hands comfortable on the coldest day.

The novelty of the new life, flavoured with his many adventures, had long since stilled completely the pangs of homesickness that had insisted upon asserting themselves dur-

ing Charley's first days at Double Up Cove, and he was quite as contented as though he had always lived in a cabin in the wilderness. Home and the old life had melted into what seemed like a far distant past to him, though his father and mother were still very real and dear, and he often imagined them as near at hand, as they were, indeed, in a spiritual sense.

On the day after their return fresh rabbit snares were set, and on the following morning when they went to look at the snares, Toby took with him two fox traps.

"I were seein' some footin' o' foxes on the mesh," he explained. "I'm thinkin' we'll set the traps, and we might get a fox. Dad would be wonderful glad and we gets a fox. There's a chance we might get a silver, or a cross, whatever."

"That would be great!" exclaimed Charley. "And can't we set other traps?"

"Aye, when I gets everything fixed up about home we'll set some marten traps too. There's fine signs o' martens. Dad don't think we can get un hereabouts, but I sees the signs and we'll get un!"

Beyond the last rabbit snare, and a quarter mile out upon an open marsh, Toby set

the first fox trap, concealing it, as Skipper Zeb had concealed his fox traps, with great care, and scattering bits of meat around the trap and over the snow, and a few drops of liquid from a bottle which he called "scent," and which had a most unpleasant odour.

"Skipper Tom Ham'll be like to bring the dogs over from Lucky Bight now any day, with the bay fast," said Toby as they turned homeward. "I wants to get some more wood cut to haul with un when they comes, but we'll set some o' the marten traps up to-morrow and more of un later."

"Oh!" exclaimed Charley. "We've been doing so many things I forgot all about the dogs! Then we can travel with them?"

"Aye, we'll be cruisin' with un. 'Twill be a fine way for you to get used to un, helpin' me haul in the wood, and you'll be learnin' to drive un. We hauls in most of our wood in the spring, but they's some left to haul, and if I cuts more whilst they's a chanst before the snow gets too deep, we'll be haulin' that too, so there'll be plenty of un."

"How many dogs are there?" Charley asked eagerly.

"Eight of un," answered Toby, "and 'tis the best team on The Labrador, *I* thinks.

They's the real nu'thern dogs. Dad says the nu'thern dogs has more wolf in they than others has."

"Do they look like wolves?" Charley asked in some awe.

"Aye, they look so much like un you could scarce tell un from wolves, only they curls their tails up over their backs and wolves don't."

"Are they cross?" Charley inquired anxiously.

"I wouldn't call un cross," explained Toby. "I calls un sneaky. If they thinks they could down you, they'd do un quick enough. 'Tis best to carry a stick when you goes abroad among un, till you gets used to un and they gets used to you. They're wonderful scared of a stick."

"I'll carry a stick, but I'll make friends with them too. I like dogs."

"They's not like other dogs," warned Toby. "Maybe you won't be likin' they so much after you sees un."

"I can hardly wait till the dogs come! I've read so much about Eskimo dogs, but I never saw them pulling a sledge, and I know it's going to be great sport traveling with them."

"Soon as Tom brings un we'll start haulin' the wood. I'll have to be workin' wonderful hard cuttin' more, so we'll have un hauled before too late. The wood gets so deep under, that 'tis hard to dig un out o' the snow."

"I could look after the snares and fox traps," suggested Charley, "and you could cut wood. I can set up some more snares, too."

"Aye, now, you could look after un, whilst I cuts more wood. You knows from the tracks we makes where the traps are set, and you can find un. I'll be cuttin' no more wood after the next snow comes. 'Twill be gettin' too deep by then, and I'll not be havin' long to cut un."

"All right," and Charley was quite delighted with the prospect of responsibility, and the fact that Toby would trust him to go alone. "I'll start in to-morrow morning. May I carry your shotgun when I go?"

"Aye, carry un. You may be pickin' up some pa'tridges."

In accordance with this arrangement, Charley visited the rabbit snares and the fox traps alone the next morning, and returned quite elated with his experience, bringing with him three rabbits that he had found in

snares and four spruce grouse that he had shot. It was dinner time when he appeared, and he reported to Toby, who had just reached the cabin after a morning chopping wood, that there was nothing in the fox traps, and that he had set up three new snares.

"That's fine, now," Toby praised. "I were knowin' you could 'tend the snares and traps alone. You can do un as well as I can."

"Thank you," said Charley, much elated at Toby's praise. "It was great fun."

For two more days Charley proudly followed the trail alone, and then came a morning with a heavily overcast sky, and a keen northeast wind blowing in from the bay. Toby predicted that it would snow before midday, and as Charley slipped his feet into his snowshoe slings, and shouldered Toby's gun preparatory to setting out to make the morning round of the traps and snares alone, Toby warned:

"If snow starts, 'twill be best to turn about and come home as soon as you sees un start. If she comes she'll cover the footin' wonderful fast, and you might be goin' abroad from the trail. The wind'll be risin' a bit, and if she blows hard 'twill make for nasty travelin', and I'm thinkin' when the snow

starts the wind'll come up quick, and be blowin' wonderful hard before you knows un."

"Oh, I'll be all right," Charley assured confidently. "I ought to know my way by this time, even if the snow does cover my tracks."

"'Twill be safer to turn back," said Toby. "Don't go to the fox traps. 'Twill do no harm to let un stand over a day."

Charley had reached the last of the rabbit snares before the first flakes of the threatened storm fell. He had three rabbits in a game bag slung over his shoulder, and he was hesitating as to whether or not he should visit the fox traps or heed Toby's warning to turn back, when he was startled by a flock of ptarmigans, or "white pa'tridges," as Toby called them, rising at the edge of the marsh.

The partridges flew a short distance out upon the marsh, and alighted upon the snow. Charley could see them plainly. They offered a good shot, and it would be a feat to bag some of them.

Quite excited with the prospect, he followed them, and with careful stalking brought down two, one with each barrel of

his gun. Startled by the shots, the remainder of the flock flew farther into the open marsh, and elated with his success Charley picked up the two birds he had killed, and following the flock soon succeeded in bagging two more. The next flight was much farther, but he overtook them and shot a fifth bird. They now took a long flight, and were lost in the mist of snow, which was now falling thickly.

Forgetting all caution, Charley continued to follow in the direction in which the birds had disappeared. On and on he went without a thought of danger. He was sure the birds had not gone far, and he must have one more shot at them before turning back.

All at once, he found himself in a rocky, barren region. He had crossed the marsh, and was rising upon higher ground. This must certainly, he concluded, be a barren beyond the marsh of which Toby had told him, and he suddenly realized that he had gone much farther than he had yet ventured.

In the brief space of time since he had last flushed the birds the wind had risen and was fast gaining strength. Already the snow was drifting so thickly that he could not see the marsh, which lay between the barrens and the forest. But still he was not alarmed.

"I've got five of them anyway," he said exultantly, looking into his bag and admiring the beautiful white birds. "Toby said it was some stunt to shoot ptarmigans. I guess he'll think now that I can shoot most as well as he can."

With no other thought than that he could find his way to the marsh and across it to the forest without difficulty, he turned to retrace his steps.

"Even if I can't see far, I can follow my tracks I made coming in," he said confidently. "That'll be dead easy."

Every moment the wind was rising, and the storm was increasing in fury. Before he had reached the marsh, the gale was sweeping the snow before it in suffocating clouds, and he was forced frequently to turn his back upon it that he might catch his breath.

Presently Charley realized that he had lost the trail of his snowshoe prints, but still confident that he could find it he searched first to the right and then to the left, but nowhere could he discover it.

Then it was that he became anxious, and a vague fear fell upon him, and he rushed madly about in vain search of some sign that would guide him. He could scarcely see

twenty feet away, and nowhere within his limited range of vision was a rock or bush or anything that he had ever before seen. Suddenly he knew that he was lost. The thought fell upon him like an overwhelming disaster. All at once he was seized by wild terror. He must find the forest or he would perish! The snow was suffocating him, and his legs were atremble with the effort he had put forth.

Dazed and uncertain he stood, with the wind swirling the snow about him, and then, with no sense of direction, like a panic-stricken animal, he plunged away into the storm.

XVI

A WALL OF SNOW

SEVERAL times he fell, and regaining his feet rushed madly and blindly about in vain hope of finding the lost trail and escaping the doom that seemed closing in upon him. The snow clouds were like dense walls, and he, like a child, in puny effort wildly trying to batter them down to gain his freedom.

Finally exhaustion overtook him, and with it a degree of reason. His legs were weak and quivering with their effort. He began to realize that he had been depending upon them to extricate him from the trackless marsh in which he wandered, instead of using reason. Limp and trembling as a result of the mad fear that had taken possession of him, and the tremendous physical exertion he had been putting forth, he stopped and with wild, still frightened eyes gazed at the walls of snow that surrounded him like an impassable barrier.

Then his brain began to function and his reason to return. He knew that he must

reach the cover of the forest, where the trees would shelter him from the blasts that swept the marsh. There he would find some measure of protection at least, and in any case the forest lay between him and the cabin at Double Up Cove.

He recalled that time and again Toby had said to him, "Dad's wonderful fine at gettin' out o' fixes, and he always does un by usin' his head." And Skipper Zeb himself had said, "When a man gets into a fix 'tis mostly because he don't use his head, and 'tis his head has to get he out of un. His legs and his hands won't help he, unless his head tells un what to do."

That was logical and reasonable. He was now in a "fix," and a worse fix indeed than that in which he and Toby had found themselves on Swile Island. Charley crouched with his back to the snow-laden blasts while he tried to gather his senses and his poise, and these thoughts flashing through his mind, gave him courage. It was bitterly cold and he knew that he must soon find shelter or he would perish. In his mad panic, he had not only lost knowledge of direction, but had expended much of his strength.

Slowly it occurred to him that the wind

blew across the marsh from the direction of the forest and toward the barrens, and was in his back when he followed the ptarmigans. This being the case, he reasoned, he must *face* the wind to regain the forest.

He was somewhere in the marsh. He knew that. The forest must lie *up* the wind. It was suffocating and paralyzing work to face it, but in that direction alone lay the only chance for escape and safety. His very life depended upon reaching the forest, and reaching it soon, and he turned boldly to it.

With renewed courage, he fought his way forward step by step. He would walk but a little way, when dense snow clouds would force him to turn his back upon them to regain his breath. But he kept going, now and again stumbling and falling and then getting to his feet again to stumble on a little farther. The distance seemed interminable, and several times he was on the point of giving up the struggle in despair.

Then it was that he collided with a tree. An outpost of the forest! His heart leaped with hope. With renewed vigour he plunged forward into wind and snow cloud, and a moment later was under the blessed shelter of the trees.

The wind raged through the tree tops, but the thick growth of the spruce forest protected him. He did not know where he was, and could see no familiar thing. Finally, too weary to go farther, he crawled under the low branches of a tree to rest.

Charley was dozing and half unconscious when a distant crash startled him into wakefulness. What could it have been? He listened intently. Then it came again, and he sprang to his feet excitedly. He had no doubt now. It was the report of a rifle, and some one was within hearing.

Through all his struggle in the marsh, Charley had unconsciously clung to Toby's shotgun. He fired one barrel, and then the other. An answering shot rang out above the roar of the wind, and not so far away now. He ran in the direction from which it came. Then came another shot, now quite near, and a moment later he saw Toby hurrying toward him.

Charley's heart leaped with joy and relief. How good Toby looked! Dear Toby, who always seemed to be on hand when he was needed!

"You looks fair scragged!" greeted Toby. "Were you gettin' lost?"

"Lost—I was lost out on the barrens and the marsh!" and Charley was scarce able to choke back tears of joy and relief.

Toby after the manner of woodsmen had brought his ax. He quickly cut some wood, and in a few moments had a rousing fire. Then he cut some poles, and made a lean-to, which he thatched thickly with boughs, and within it made a couch of boughs where they could sit before the fire protected from the storm.

While Toby prepared and broiled two of the ptarmigans, Charley told the story of his experiences.

"I was scared stiff," said Charley in closing. "If I had done as you told me to do, and gone straight home when the snow began it wouldn't have happened. But I didn't know a storm could come up like that, or how bad it could get in a few minutes."

"You were usin' your head when you goes up the wind, and that gets you out of a wonderful bad fix," said Toby. "Dad says the only way to get out of fixes is to use your head, and he knows."

There was never a word of reproach from Toby for not having heeded his advice, and for this Charley was grateful.

XVII

SKIPPER ZEB'S DOGS

LONG TOM HAM was glad to have the care of Skipper Zeb's dogs during the summer. There was always enough food from the sea for them during the fishing season, and a supply of seal meat from the spring sealing to feed them in the fall, after the fishing season was ended. And to compensate him for caring for the dogs, he had them to haul his winter's wood in from the forest, before returning them to Skipper Zeb, which he always did after the bay was frozen and his fall hauling was finished.

In summer, with no work to do, and as much to eat as ever they wished, the dogs were sleek and fat and lazy, and quite harmless. But with the close of the fishing season they were given but one meal a day, and that in the evening, and only enough to keep them strong and in good condition, for fat dogs will not work well.

With frosty weather and less food they roused from their lethargy. Then it was

that they became savage, snapping creatures, with no more affection for man than has the wild wolf, which was their ancestor. Long Tom Ham declared that Skipper Zeb's dogs were the most "oncivil team of dogs he ever knew."

Toby and Charley, a week after the big storm, were returning home at midday after a morning in the forest setting marten traps, when, just as they came around the corner of the cabin, and the bay below them came into view, Toby exclaimed:

"There's Skipper Tom comin' with the dogs and komatik!"[1]

For the first time in his life Charley saw dogs in harness. They were still a half mile away, the animals spread out in fan-shaped formation, and trotting leisurely. As they approached nearer the cabin they broke into a run, as though eager to reach their destination, and with short yelps swung off of the ice and came charging up to the cabin where Charley and Toby were awaiting them.

Skipper Tom Ham, his beard encrusted with ice, disembarked from the komatik, and Charley thought him the tallest man he had ever seen.

[1] Sledge.

"'Ere I ham, and 'ow are you hall?" greeted Skipper Tom through his ice mask, as he extended a hand to Toby and then to Charley.

"We're all well," said Toby. "Were you gettin' your wood all hauled?"

"Aye, hall my wood is 'auled, and I'm most thankful I 'ad the dogs to 'aul un, and most thankful to be rid of un. So Hi'm twice thankful," said Skipper Tom following Toby and Charley into the house to join them at dinner, picking the ice from his beard as he talked.

"Them's the most honcivil dogs I knows," remarked Skipper Tom, as he ate. "Hi comes 'ome from my traps last hevenin' and I sees Martha sittin' hup on the scaffold where I keeps the dog meat, and the dogs hall haround lookin' at 'er. When she sees me she yells the dogs be hafter 'er, and I says to 'er that they thinks she his goin' to feed 'em, and she says she thinks they his goin' to heat 'er. Hi tells 'er to come down, and she comes, and when we gets hinto the 'ouse she says, 'Tom, you take them dogs right hover to Skipper Zeb's,' and so Hi brings the honcivil beasts hover."

Tom chuckled at the recollection of his

wife's fear and her appearance on the scaffold the evening before. When he was through he said he must return at once, or Martha would think the dogs had eaten him. Toby suggested taking Skipper Tom home with dogs and komatik, but Skipper Tom declined on the ground that it was just a wee bit of a walk, and he would rather walk and look for partridges along shore as he went. The ten mile walk to Lucky Bight was no hardship to Skipper Tom.

The coming of the dogs was an exciting incident to Charley. They were big, handsome creatures, though with a fierce, evil look, and a sneaking manner that made Charley feel uncomfortable when they were loosed from harness, and had liberty to prowl about at will.

"'Tis a wonderful team," Toby declared proudly. "They comes from Nuth'ard dogs, though we raises they all from pups. Some of un has wild wolves for fathers. Tinker there is one, and so are Rocks and Sampson. They comes from the same litter. That un over there is Nancy. I names she from a schooner that calls at Pinch-In Tickle every spring. That un next she, with the end of his tail gone, is Traps. Whilst he were a

pup he gets the end of his tail in a trap, and loses the end of un. I remember his howlin' yet! Nancy and Traps be brother and sister. Tucker and Skipper and Molly are the names of the others. We gets un from the Post when they's just weaned and are wee pups. They tells us they has wild wolf fathers too, but I'm not knowin'."

"That man that brought them told me, when I went to pat one of them on the head, that they were bad, and not to touch them," said Charley.

"You can't trust un," admitted Toby. "I knows un all, and I plays with un when they's pups, but if I were trippin' and fallin' down among un now, I'm not doubtin' they's tear me abroad."

"After you raised them from pups, and always had them, and feed them and everything?" asked Charley, horrified at the suggestion.

"Aye, they has no care for man, and whilst they'll mind me a wonderful sight better than they'd be mindin' a stranger to un, they'd be tearin' me abroad if they has the chance just like a band o' wolves," warned Toby.

"They don't look so terrible, though they

do look sneaky, as you told me the other day they are," said Charley.

"Aye, sneaky, and as I tells you, 'tis never safe to go abroad among un unless you has a stick in your hand, and if they comes close strike at un. They're wonderful afraid of a stick. When they gets used to you, just kick at un, and 'twill keep un off, and then you won't be needin' a stick."

"I'll look out for them," Charley promised.

"Tinker's the leader in harness," said Toby. "He were always quick to learn, and I trains he whilst he were a pup when I plays with he before he's big enough to drive with the other dogs. Sampson's the boss, and out of harness he has his will of un. He's a bad fighter."

"He's an ugly looking brute," observed Charley.

"With the dogs about you'll be wantin' to learn to use the whip," suggested Toby. "They fears un worse than a stick. 'Tis fine sport to learn to crack un, and you'll soon learn to do that, whatever."

Toby brought forth the dog whip. It was a cruel looking instrument, with a lash of braided walrus hide, thirty-five feet in

length, and a heavy wooden handle about eighteen inches long. Toby was quite expert in its use. He could snap it with a report like a pistol shot, and at twenty-five or thirty feet distance he could, with the tip of the whip, strike a chip that was no bigger than a half dollar. When he had given an exhibition of his skill, he passed the whip to Charley.

"Now you try to snap un," said he.

It was great fun learning to handle the long whip, and though in his first awkward attempts Charley sometimes wound the lash around his own neck, where it left a red, smarting ring, with much practice he learned, in the course of two or three days, to snap it fairly well and without danger to himself.

During the days that followed Toby and Charley used the dogs and sledge, or komatik, as Toby called it, to haul wood that Toby had cut in the near-by forest. During this time Charley was gradually becoming familiar with the dogs, and sometimes Toby would permit him to guide the komatik, though he himself was always present to exact obedience from the team.

The wood hauling was done in the after-

noon, while the mornings were devoted to a visit to the rabbit snares and several marten traps, which Toby had set in the woods, and to the two fox traps on the marsh. Five fine martens had been caught, but no fox had been lured into either trap, when Toby suggested one morning, three weeks after the arrival of the dogs, that they drive the team on the coast ice to a point opposite the marsh, and by a short cut through the forest drive out upon the marsh.

"I'm thinkin' if we moves the fox traps from the mesh to the barrens we'd be gettin' a fox there," said he. "'Twould be a long walk out to the barrens to tend un, but if we takes the dogs and komatik we'd have good travelin' for un everywhere exceptin' through the short neck of woods."

"Let's do!" Charley agreed enthusiastically. "It'll be a lot quicker, and it will give us a fine trip with the dogs every day when we go to look at the traps."

And so it was arranged, and so it came to pass that on that very day Charley met with his first adventure with the dogs, and a most unusual one it was, as Toby declared.

While it was nearly twice as far to the marsh by this roundabout route, the bay ice

was in excellent condition for the dogs, and they traveled so briskly that they arrived at the point where they were to turn into the woods much too soon for Charley. Here in the deep snow it was necessary for them to tramp a trail for the dogs with their snowshoes, but the distance was short to the marsh, and once there the dogs again had a good hard bottom to walk upon.

Toby took up the two fox traps, and drove the team to the edge of the barrens, where the dogs were brought to a stop, and under the threat of the whip compelled to lie down.

"'Tis rocky and bad travelin' in here, and if we takes the komatik we'll have to help the dogs pull un some places," said Toby. "The wind sends the snow abroad from the rocks, and plenty of places they're bare. I'm thinkin' now if you stays with the dogs and komatik, I'll go and set the traps. I'll be back in half an hour, whatever."

"All right," agreed Charley. "I'll stay with them."

"If they tries to get up, take the whip and make un lie down," Toby directed. "Keep un lyin' down."

Toby strode away upon his snowshoes, and quickly disappeared over a low knoll. For

the first time Charley was alone with the dogs, and he felt some pride in the fact that they were under his direction.

Suddenly Sampson became restless, and he and Tinker rose to their feet. Charley snapped the whip over them, and reluctantly they lay down.

But it was only for a moment. All of the dogs had their noses in the air, and before Charley could quiet them they were all on their feet restlessly sniffing the air. Charley swung the whip, and shouted at them to lie down, but they were beyond his control, and would not lie down, but jumped and strained at their traces, giving out short whines and howls. He struck at Sampson with the butt end of the whip, and Sampson snapped at him with ugly fangs, and would have sprung upon him had the dog's trace not held him in leash.

Then the komatik broke loose. Charley threw himself upon it, still clinging to the whip, as the dogs, at a mad gallop, turned across a neck of the marsh and toward a low hill that rose at the edge of the barrens and a quarter of a mile to the westward.

The komatik bounced from side to side with every hummock of ice it struck, and

several times was in imminent danger of overturning. Charley shouted "Ah! Ah!" at the top of his voice in vain effort to stop the mad beasts, and then "Ouk! Ouk! Ouk!" and "Rahder! Rahder! Rahder!" in the hope that they would swing to the right or to the left and return to the starting point.

But on they went, howling more excitedly and going faster and faster until, suddenly, at the farther side of the neck of marsh and at the very edge of the barrens, the komatik struck a rock and with the impact the bridle, a line of walrus hide which connected the dogs' traces to the komatik, snapped. The yelping, howling dogs, freed from the komatik, ran wildly and eagerly on, and soon passed over the lower slopes of the hill and out of sight.

Charley, dazed at what had happened, watched the dogs disappear. Then, in sudden realization that they had escaped from him and were gone, he ran after them calling them excitedly but vainly.

He had not run far when all at once he saw them swing down over the brow of the hill toward the komatik, and he turned about and ran to the komatik to intercept them with the

whip, which he was still dragging. The dogs were before him, a snarling, fighting mass. He was sure they would tear each other to pieces. He was about to lay the whip upon them when to his amazement he discovered that there were many more than eight dogs fighting, and that the strangers were even more ferocious creatures than those of the team, and wore no harness.

He brought down his whip upon the savage mass. Immediately one of the strange animals turned upon him, showing its gleaming white fangs, and with short, snapping yelps was about to spring at him, when Sampson, taking advantage of the animal's diverted attention, snapped his fangs into its neck.

Then it was that the truth dawned upon Charley. The strange beasts were not dogs, but a pack of the terrible northern wolves of which he had heard. It was plain, too, that the dogs were no match for them, and then the thought came to him that he had no firearms and no means of protecting himself against them.

XVIII

THE FIGHT WITH THE WOLVES

A COLD sweat broke out upon Charley's body. His knees went limp. He felt like one receiving the sentence of death. He was sure that he would presently be torn to pieces by the savage beasts.

The wolves were getting the better of the fight. They were one less in number than the dogs, but the dogs were hampered by their harness, and they were not as free to spring aside and snap at their enemy as were the wolves. Tucker and Traps, bleeding and mangled, were falling back and trying to escape. The other dogs were fighting valiantly, but they were fighting a losing fight, and Charley's untrained eyes could see that there would soon be an end of it, with the wolves victors.

Toby had taken his rifle with him, and Charley was unarmed. There was no chance for defence, and no escape. There was not a tree nearer than the farther side of the marsh that he could climb, and long before

he could reach the woods the fight would be over and the wolves would be after him.

His eyes, as he looked helplessly about, fell upon an ax tucked under the lashings of the komatik. With nervous hands he drew it forth, and held it ready to strike at the first attacking animal.

Sampson and a big gray wolf were facing each other, and each maneuvering for an opening to snap at the other's throat. The wolf's back was toward Charley, and not two paces away. With a sudden impulse he sprang forward and brought the ax down upon the creature's head. It fell and lay still. He had killed it with one blow.

The two wolves that were attacking Tucker and Traps, sensing a new and more formidable enemy, turned upon Charley. Swinging his ax he held them at bay, while they crouched, watching for an opening, their lips drawn back from their ugly fangs, while with ferocious snaps and yelps they voiced their defiance.

Then came the sharp report of a rifle, and one of the wolves fell. Then another report, and the other crumpled by the side of its dead mate.

The remainder of the pack, suddenly

aware of a new and unknown danger, broke from the dogs and ran, with bullets from Toby's rifle raising little spurts of snow around them until they disappeared over a spur of the hill.

"I hears the fightin'," said Toby, "and I runs as fast as I can. I sees you knock that un over with the ax. 'Twere wonderful plucky, Charley, to fight un with an ax."

Charley sank, weak and trembling, upon the komatik.

"I—thought—they'd—kill—me," he said.

"'Twere lucky I hears un." Toby stooped and felt of the fur of one of those he had shot. "They's prime, and we gets three of un, whatever. They pays six dollars for wolf skins at the post, and we'll be gettin' eighteen dollars for un. The dogs gets cut up some, but not so bad, and they'll get over un."

Charley made no response. He was not interested in the character or value of the fur. He was too close to the peril from which he had escaped. He had been face to face with what he had believed to be certain death. How could Toby treat the incident with so little concern, and apparently with so little appreciation of the grave danger

just ended? He was giving first thought to the value of the pelts, as though that mattered in the least.

Toby, on his part, did not in any degree deprecate the peril in which Charley had been placed, but now that it was ended, why should he talk about it or even think about it? This was a habit of his life, a life of unremitting endeavour in a stern land with its own dangers and adventures which Toby accepted as a matter of course and to be expected. In his city streets Charley might dodge an automobile at a crossing and escape with his life by a hair's breadth, but Charley would scarcely give such an adventure a second thought. But to Toby such would have been an adventure to think and talk about and to remember with a thrill.

To Toby now, the matter of chief importance was the fact that he and Charley had earned the trade value of three wolf pelts, which was eighteen dollars, and that was a good day's wages. The danger was at an end and behind them, and no longer worth a thought; the reward was before them, and Toby began immediately, as a habit of life, to enjoy it in anticipation.

While life warmth was still in the car-

casses, the boys turned their attention to the removal of the pelts, after first securing the dogs and repairing the broken bridle. As Charley worked his interest in his trophy grew, and he was as proud of it as he had ever been of anything in his life. He had killed a wolf at close quarters! It was an achievement to be proud of, and what normal boy or man would not have been proud of it?

This was the first pelt that Charley had ever secured by his own effort, and when they reached home he insisted upon stretching it himself, with a word or two of advice from Toby. Then, with a sheathknife, and with much pride, he scraped it free from every particle of clinging flesh and fat.

None of the dogs, as an examination disclosed, was seriously injured, though Tucker and Traps had suffered severe lacerations from the wolf fangs, and these two were relieved from team work for several days.

During the week following the adventure with the wolves, good fortune smiled upon the young hunters. More martens were captured, increasing the number of marten pelts to nine, and Toby shot an otter.

But the crowning event of the winter, and,

Toby was sure, the big event of his life, came two days after the fox traps had been removed from the marsh to the barrens, when Toby found in one of them a silver fox. They all declared, as did Long Tom Ham, who came over from Lucky Bight to see the pelt, that it was the blackest, thickest and longest furred, and glossiest silver fox they had ever seen.

"'Tis rare fine fur," said Mrs. Twig, shaking out the pelt and holding it up to admire it when it was finally dry and Toby had removed it from the board that it might be packed carefully and safely away in one of the chests.

"Aye," boasted Toby, "'tis that. 'Twill be worth five hundred dollars at the post, or four hundred *what*ever."

"Now we'll not have to skimp so with things," said Mrs. Twig happily. "The silver'll get us a wonderful lot o' things we needs, and 'twill pay the debt at the post."

"We has the marten skins, too," said Toby. "They's worth at the post thirty dollars apiece, good martens like they. Skipper Tom Ham says that be the price this year for good black martens, and all we has is black. I'm thinkin' the otter'll be bringin' fifty dol-

lars whatever. 'Tis a wonderful fine skin o' fur."

"You and Charley were wonderful lucky gettin' fur," said Mrs. Twig in praise.

In another ten days Skipper Zeb would come home from his trapping grounds to bring the pelts he had captured, and to take back with him, after a fortnight's rest, a fresh supply of provisions.

Skipper Zeb's mid-winter return was always an occasion for great rejoicing, but this winter it would have an added flavour of joy. All of them were keenly anxious that he see the silver fox pelt, and Toby declared he could hardly wait to show it to him.

"'Twill be a rare treat for he, now," said Toby.

It was an event, indeed. Even Skipper Zeb had never in all his life caught a silver fox. Toby and Charley were justly proud, too, of their success in catching martens. Skipper Zeb had smiled indulgently when Toby had told him that with Charley's help he would set some marten traps, and Skipper Zeb's only remark had been, "'Twill be fine practice for you lads," never expecting that they would get a pelt. Indeed, Toby's previous winter's trapping had resulted in noth-

ing but rabbits, but that was due, Toby had complained, to the fact that his mother had not permitted him to go so far alone into the forest. But this year he was older, and with Charley's companionship she had made no restrictions upon bounds.

"And there are the wolf skins," said Toby. "I wants Charley to take un home with he when he goes next summer on the mail boat. 'Twere he that fought for un, and they belongs to he."

"Aye, they belongs to Charley," agreed Mrs. Twig, "and half the martens too. If 'tweren't for Charley bein' here to go along with you, you couldn't have got un, with all the work you were havin' to do with the wood, to make you bide home. If Charley were havin' a rifle when he meets the wolves he'd have got more of un, and the dogs wouldn't have got cut up so bad."

"I wish I had a rifle," Charley suggested eagerly. "I've got sixty dollars my father gave me before I left him. Is there anywhere I could buy one with that?"

"You'll be needin' that to pay your passage back home," Mrs. Twig counseled. "You needs some warm underclothes, and I'm thinkin' now you and Toby might take

the dogs and komatik and go to Skipper Cy Blink's tradin' store at Deer Harbour, and take three of the marten skins and trade un in for a rifle and what you needs, and Toby can get some things we're needin' in the house."

"Oh, I wish we could!" Charley exclaimed. "But the skins aren't really mine," he added more soberly. "I owe you a lot for keeping me here, and for all you've done for me, but Dad will pay you for that when I get home."

"You owes us nothing," declared Mrs. Twig, a little out of patience that Charley should have suggested it. "You pays for all you gets in work, and half the skins be yours, whatever."

"Thank you," said Charley gratefully, "but I can't help feeling that you're doing a lot more for me than I deserve, and I'm sure a good deal more than I've earned."

"You earns all of un, and more than you gets," insisted Mrs. Twig kindly. "'Tis wonderful fine to have you here with Toby, and we're gettin' to think so much you belongs to us 'twill be a rare hard thing to see you go. You lads better be startin' for Deer Harbour in the marnin'. You'll be reachin'

Pinch-In Tickle by noon, whatever, with the fine footin' for the dogs, and Deer Harbour by night. Comin' back the next day you can bide the night at Pinch-In Tickle, and fetch back the fishin' gear that needs mendin', so 'twill be here to work on when they's time to work on un."

Charley and Toby were as excited as they could be, and that evening all arrangements were made for an early start in the morning. It was to be Charley's first long dog journey, and that night he lay awake a long time thinking of the wonderful journey he was to have, and of the new rifle he was to buy.

XIX

CHARLEY'S NEW RIFLE

BREAKFAST was eaten early, and long before daylight, which in that latitude does not come at this season until nearly ten o'clock. Toby and Charley brought the komatik box into the cabin that Mrs. Twig might pack it for them.

In a cotton bag as a protection, the precious marten pelts were stored in the bottom of the box. Then came the provisions consisting of hardtack, which would not freeze as would ordinary bread, tea, a bottle of molasses, a liberal quantity of salt pork, and the necessary cooking utensils. As a precaution in case of accident some extra duffle socks, and an extra pair of buckskin moccasins were included for each, and Toby added some cartridges for his rifle.

The box packed, it was lashed upon the rear of the komatik, and on the floor of the sledge, in front of the box, Toby spread an untanned caribou skin, and upon it lashed their sleeping bags, securing his rifle and an

ax under the lashings, and tying to them his own and Charley's snowshoes.

"Look out for bad ice, and be wonderful careful on the ballicaders,"[1] cautioned Mrs. Twig, as Toby broke the komatik loose and the dogs dashed away down the decline to the bay ice.

A big full moon lighted the ice, which stretched before them for miles in an unbroken white sheet. Rime filled the air, and soon their clothing was coated with a film of frost. In the silvery moonlight they passed the black cliff of the Duck's Head. They were well down the bay when daylight came, and at last the sun rose, and its glorious rays set the rime-filled air shimmering like a veil of silver.

An hour before noon they reached Pinch-In Tickle, and stopped in the cabin to boil the kettle and eat a hasty luncheon. What memories it revived of the day when Charley first entered the door with Toby, and was first greeted by Skipper Zeb! How miserable a place in which to live Charley thought it then! How alone and deserted he felt! Now it appealed to him as not uncomfortable, and here he had found friends and a

[1] Ice barriers skirting open water.

welcome; and the thought came to him that when the time to leave The Labrador came he would feel equally as badly at the leaving as he had at the entry.

Upon investigation, the ice in the tickle proved unsafe, and in the center there was some open water, where the tide surging in and out of the narrow passage had not permitted it to freeze.

In order, therefore, to reach the sea ice outside, it proved necessary to cross the low ridge of hills to the eastward of the cabin, which Charley and Toby had climbed on the day that the mail boat deserted Charley.

The ridge was bare of trees, and there was a hard coating of icy snow upon its rocky surface. From the cabins to the summit the slope was gradual, and with some help over the steeper places, the dogs hauled the komatik to the summit with little difficulty.

The descent to the sea ice on the opposite side was much more abrupt. Immediately it was begun, the komatik began to coast, and Toby threw a ring of braided walrus hide over the front end of one of the runners. This "drag," as he called it, was three feet in diameter and as thick as his wrist. The lower side of the ring, dragging back under

the runner, was forced into the hard snow, and thus served to retard the komatik, but even then it gathered such speed that the dogs were forced to turn aside, lest it should run them down, and to race with it as fast as they could run. Toby threw himself upon his side upon the komatik, clinging to it with both hands, and sticking his heels into the snow at the side and in front of him, and running with the komatik at the same time, put forth all his strength to hold it back.

This is exceedingly dangerous work, as Charley realized. A single misstep might result in a broken leg, and even worse injury, and Charley held his breath in expectation that some such catastrophe would surely happen before they reached the bottom.

Once a dog's trace caught over a rock. The dog was sent sprawling, and Charley expected that the speeding komatik would strike and crush the helpless animal. But fortunately the trace slipped over the top of the rock just in time for the dog to escape, and in a moment it was on its feet again, racing with its companions.

They had covered two-thirds of the descent, when to their horror the boys saw a ribbon of black water, several yards in

width, separating the shore from the sea ice. They were dashing directly toward it at tremendous speed, and Charley was sure that they could not avoid a plunge into its cold depths.

"Roll off!" Toby shouted.

Charley rolled clear of the speeding komatik, pitching over and over, and finally sliding to a stop, dazed and bewildered, but in time to see the komatik, bottom up, at the very brink of the chasm. Toby was sprawling just above it. The dogs, with traces taut, stood above him bracing themselves to hold the sledge from slipping farther.

"Oh!" cried Charley running down to Toby, who was up and righting the komatik before he could reach him, "I was sure we were going over!"

"We were wonderful close to un!" said Toby. "When you drops off, I jerks the front of the komatik and that makes she turn over and roll, and when I does un the dogs stops and holds fast. If 'tweren't for that we'd sure gone into the water and liker'n not been drowned."

"What'll we do now?" asked Charley. "We can't reach the sea ice."

"Follow the ballicaders," said Toby, in-

dicating a narrow strip of ice hanging to the shore above the water. "'Twere careless of me not to think of the open water. This early in winter 'tis always like this above and below the tickle."

For nearly an hour they traveled upon the ice barricade. Sometimes it was so narrow that Charley's heart was in his mouth in fear that the komatik would slip over the brink. But Toby was a good driver, and at last they came in safety to the end of the water, with the ocean solidly frozen as far as they could see.

Here they turned upon the sea ice, and presently left the shore behind them to cross a wide bay. The sun was setting, and they were approaching land on the opposite shore of the bay, when Toby remarked:

"We're most there. Deer Harbour's just around that p'int you sees ahead."

Just before dusk they drove up to the little log house and trading store of Skipper Cyrus Blink, and glad enough they were to be met at the door by Skipper Blink, who greeted them most heartily, and helped them to unharness their dogs and unpack their komatik, and when they had fed the dogs ushered them into the warm cabin, where

Mrs. Blink, who had seen them coming, had a pot of hot tea ready to pour and a "snack" to eat to "stay their stummiks" till supper would be ready.

Skipper Blink's store, or "shop" as he called it, was in a small room adjoining the living-room. It was a most primitive emporium of a most primitive frontier. Its stock of goods was limited to the necessities of the people, and consisted chiefly of flour, pork, molasses, duffle, practical clothing, arms and ammunition, with a pail of "sweets," or hard candies that at some remote date might have laid claim to being "fresh." It was a small branch shop of the Hudson's Bay Company's establishment known as the "Post" at Snow Inlet, some twenty miles to the northward, and Skipper Blink received from the Company a commission upon the trade which he did.

Charley could scarcely restrain his eagerness to hold in his hands the new rifle which he was to purchase, and when he and Toby had finished their "snack," he asked:

"Have you any guns for sale?"

"Aye," said the Skipper, "I has three shotguns in the shop and three rifles. What kind now would you be wantin'?"

"A rifle," said Charley. "Do you think I might see it now?"

"You can see un," answered the Skipper obligingly. "I'll fetch un right in here where 'tis warm. I has a forty-four carbine, a forty-five rifle and a thirty rifle. The forty-five would be a bit heavy for you. The forty-four is fine and light, and so is the thirty, and that's a wonderful far shootin' and strong shootin' gun, but the ca'tridges comes high."

"Thank you," said Charley, "I'd like to look at the rifles."

Accordingly Skipper Cy lighted a candle, and passed through the door leading to the shop, presently to return with the three rifles.

"Now here be the forty-four," said he, presenting the carbine for inspection. "'Tis a wonderful light fine gun for a lad."

"It's just like yours, isn't it, Toby?" Charley asked.

"Aye," said Toby, "the one I has is a forty-four carbine, just like this un."

"'Tis a fine rifle for any shootin'," explained Skipper Blink. "'Tis strong enough for deer or bear, if you hits un right, and 'tis fine for pa'tridges if you shoots un in the head. I finds un fine to hunt with, and 'tis not so costive as the others."

"Let me see the forty-five," suggested Charley. "That looks like a big, strong gun."

"Here 'tis now," and Skipper Blink handed it to Charley. "'Tis a wonderful sight stronger shootin' gun than the forty-four, but 'tis a bit too heavy for a lad like you to pack. 'Twould make for weariness, packin' she all day."

"It is heavy," agreed Charley, returning it to Skipper Blink, and eyeing the thirty caliber. "May I see the other one?"

"Aye, and there 'tis now. She's the best, and I keeps she for the last," said Skipper Blink proudly, as he delivered it into Charley's hands. "*She's* a rifle now. She's the best and strongest shootin' gun I ever sees."

"This isn't heavy," said Charley. "I like it mighty well. Try it, Toby, and see what you think of it."

"She is fine and light," said Toby. "I likes un better'n the forty-four."

"So do I, ever so much," said Charley taking it back from Toby, and handling it caressingly.

"You knows a good gun when you sees un, lad," flattered Skipper Blink. "I were thinkin' when you asks to see un that you'd

be pickin' that un, and I were sayin' to myself, 'There's a lad now what knows a gun, and he'll be wantin' the thirty.' But 'tis the most costive of all of un."

"I'll take it anyhow," agreed Charley, fondling the arm, quite sure that his happiness depended upon owning it, and recognizing it as the undoubted aristocrat of the three.

"That's right, lad," beamed the Skipper. "When the bullet from that un hits a deer, you'll be gettin' the deer, whatever. Let me get a bit o' rag and wipe the grease off of she. And we'll take the ramrod and wipe out the barrel. 'Tis clogged full o' grease, and if you shoots she without cleanin' she out 'tis like to split she."

When Skipper Cy had cleaned the gun to his satisfaction he handed it to Charley, with the suggestion:

"You'll be needin' some ca'tridges—a hundred, whatever."

"I'll take a hundred and fifty," said Charley proudly.

"They comes twenty in a box," advised the Skipper. "If you takes seven boxes 'twill do you. 'Tis all I has."

"Very well," agreed Charley.

It was Charley's first gun. He fondled it and handled it, and scarce put it down until Mrs. Blink announced supper, and they sat down to an appetizing meal of bruise.[1] Both boys were hungry, and Skipper Cy urged them to eat.

"Fill up, now," he would say. "Take more of un. You lads have had a long day cruisin', and I'm not doubtin' you're fair starved."

And they ate and ate of the bruise until they could eat no more, with all the good Skipper's urging.

When they were through Skipper Cy took them into the store, or "shop" as he called it, where Charley purchased fresh underwear for himself and for Toby to take the place of that which Toby had let him use, and Toby purchased necessities which Mrs. Twig required at home, and still there was a small balance left to Charley's credit.

"I'd like something for Mrs. Twig," suggested Charley. "Have you anything you think she'd like?"

"Just the thing! Just the thing!" and Skipper Cy produced a small woolen shawl. "She'll like un for her shoulders. Mrs.

[1] Hardtack and salt codfish cooked together.

Blink wears one of un, and she's wonderful proud of un, and says 'tis a rare comfort."

"Mother *would* like un wonderful well," advised Toby, much pleased at Charley's thoughtfulness.

"All right," agreed Charley. "And now I want something for Violet."

"I has just the thing for the little maid!" Skipper Cy beamed delightedly.

Going to a chest he produced a really nice and prettily dressed little doll.

"Here's a doll I gets at the Moravian Mission. I gets un because 'tis a pretty trinket, but I has no use for un. Take un to the little maid from me, and tell she I sends un to she."

"Vi'let never has a doll in her life, but just a bit of cloth tied around a stick Mother fixes up for she and she calls a doll!" exclaimed Toby delightedly.

"It is *just* the thing! But I want to pay for it," insisted Charley. "I want to give it to her myself."

Finally it was agreed that Charley should pay Skipper Cy the price that he had paid the Mission folk for it, and he was perhaps quite as happy, and even more happy, with the thought of the pleasure his gifts would

give Mrs. Twig and Violet than with his new rifle.

This closed Charley's purchases, and still he found that there was a small balance due him. This balance, he insisted, Toby should use in selecting something for himself, and Toby acquired some additional cartridges for his rifle, confessing that his supply was low, and from the pail of ancient candy a quantity of "sweets" to take home; and though the candy was hard with age, in this land where luxuries are scarce, it was hailed as a great treat.

They were up and had their breakfast before daylight, as is the custom in this country, and with daylight the boys went out to try Charley's new rifle, which proved to be an accurate and strong shooting gun, and quite equal to Skipper Cy's recommendation. Charley found, indeed, that he could make a better target with it than with Toby's rifle. And it was well that he had taken this early opportunity to become accustomed to its mechanism, as events proved.

Shortly after sunrise they said good-bye to Skipper and Mrs. Blink, and were on their way to Pinch-In Tickle, where it was their purpose to spend the night.

When they passed out and beyond the point and the shelter of land they met a stiff southeast wind, and looking at the sky, Toby stopped the dogs.

"'Twill be blowin' hard before noon, and 'tis like to move the ice," said Toby. "'Twill take two hours whatever to make land the other side."

"What can we do?" asked Charley. "Can we go around?"

"We'd not make un to-day," said Toby. "I'm thinkin' by hurryin' the dogs a bit we can make un. The ice'll not go abroad unless the wind blows a good bit stronger than 'tis blowin' now."

"Hadn't we better go back and wait until we're sure?" asked Charley anxiously.

"If we goes back and waits we'll not be gettin' home to-morrow," Toby objected. "We promises Mother we'd be home by to-morrow night whatever."

"Let's take a chance at it," said Charley. "This wind can't move the ice, and we can get across before it gets blowing much harder."

"Ooisht!"[1] called Toby, breaking the komatik loose, and away went the dogs.

[1] Go on.

"Oksuit! Oksuit!" [1] Toby kept calling to the dogs, snapping the whip over them and urging them ahead.

"What's that?" It was an hour later, and Charley pointed to a great moving object a half mile seaward.

"A white bear!" exclaimed Toby, after a moment's scrutiny.

"Can't we get it?" Charley excitedly clutched his new rifle.

"We'll try un! Rahder! Rahder! Rahder!" [2] Toby shouted in rapid command, as rapidly as he could speak the word.

Slowly the dogs turned to the left and toward the bear. Suddenly a sniff of the animal came down the wind. Immediately the dogs sprang forward in their traces, and with short, sharp yelps were in wild, unrestrained pursuit. The komatik swayed from side to side, now on one runner, now on the other with every ice hummock it struck.

The bear did not run. Either its dignity, its confidence in its own strength and prowess, or resentment that any should dare invade its silent domain led it to face about upon its enemies.

[1] Hurry! Hurry! [2] To the left.

XX

THE REBELLION OF THE DOGS

"HE'S like to run before we gets to he," shouted Toby, between bumps of the speeding sledge, "but I'm thinkin' the dogs'll catch he before he gets to open water if he tries gettin' away."

But the bear did not run. He rose upon his haunches, and looked upon the advancing dogs with apparent contempt, the monarch of the ice fields.

"He's a whopper!" exclaimed Charley, his heart beating double time, as Toby by means of the drag cautiously slackened the speed of the team, and at a safe distance came to a stop, with the dogs, eager to be at the bear, springing in their traces and emitting snarls and growls and little impatient yelps.

"Don't shoot till I gets the dogs clear!" warned Toby. "If he comes at un whilst they's in harness they won't have a chanst to dodge he!"

Toby threw the komatik upon its side, with

In the meantime, Toby had extricated his rifle and was running to Charley's assistance. They were taking a direction at right angles to Toby, which gave him an excellent opening, and with careful aim he fired upon the bear.

The bear paused to bite at a fresh wound, and discovering a new enemy, turned upon Toby who fired again, but with no apparent effect. Hoping to plant a bullet in the bear's head, Toby held his ground. He threw the lever forward to eject the empty shell, and jerked it back to insert a fresh cartridge with undue haste, and to his consternation it jammed. He jerked at the lever, but it would not move. Beads of perspiration broke out upon his forehead. The bear was less than a dozen feet from him.

Toby dropped his gun and ran, but he knew he could not outdistance the furious animal at his heels. At that moment Charley's rifle rang out. The tip of the bear's great paw reached Toby and sent him sprawling, and as he fell the bear suddenly sank with a grunt like the dying exhaust of an engine.

"You got un! You got un!" exclaimed Toby, springing to his feet.

"I thought he was going to get you!" said Charley, all atremble.

"He just touched me!" Toby boasted. "'Tis the first white bear killed in these parts in two years, whatever!"

Toby and Charley gloated over their prize, and when they had examined the carcass, Toby declared that it was Charley's last shot, just behind the shoulder, that had killed it.

"My shots takes un too far for'ard, and all your shots hits un too far back, except one," Toby declared.

Nearly an hour was occupied in skinning the bear, and in packing and lashing the meat upon the komatik. While they packed the meat, the dogs were permitted to feast upon the offal, as their reward, and when all was ready they turned their faces again toward Pinch-In Tickle, quite elated with their success.

Travel now, with the heavily laden komatik, was slow, and the overfed dogs required constant urging. Completely engrossed with the capture and skinning of the bear, both Toby and Charley had quite forgotten about the unstable condition of the ice. Now they were aware that the wind was blowing con-

siderably harder than when they had started. Charley was the first to speak of it.

"The wind has stiffened," said he with some concern. "The bear made us forget about the ice. Do you think it's all right?"

"That's what I'm thinkin' about." Toby looked worried. "We'll soon be knowin'. If the ice has gone abroad from the shore, we're in a worse fix than the bear had us in."

"What'll we do if it has?" asked Charley with a sinking heart.

"'Twill be a bad fix. 'Twill be a wonderful bad fix. I'm not knowin' how we'd be gettin' out of a fix like that. I'd be wishin' Dad was here to get us out of un. He's always findin' a way out of fixes. We won't be thinkin' about un till we finds out. Dad says folk worry more about things that don't happen than about things that do."

On they went in silence, tense with uncertainty, for another half hour. Charley was thinking about what Skipper Zeb had said about worry when they were in the camp at the Duck's Head, and Skipper Zeb's philosophy helped him to keep his courage.

"Ah!" Toby suddenly shouted to the dogs, and they came to a stop at the command. "She's gone abroad from the shore!" and

he pointed at a long, black streak of water between the ice and the shore ahead.

"What'll we do?" asked Charley in a frightened voice. "Can't we get to land?"

"We'll try un to the west'ard," suggested Toby. "The ice'll hold the shore longer there. 'Tis only half as far from here as we've come from the p'int this side of Deer Harbour. There's a narrow place in the bay where I'm thinkin' the ice may clog and hold."

With this he shouted "Ooisht!" to the dogs, and breaking the komatik loose, "Ouk! Ouk! Ouk!" until they were pointing toward the opposite shore of the bay, and farther inland.

"And you runs ahead of the dogs now," suggested Toby, "'twill help un to work faster. I'll push un with the whip. Make toward the Capstan. That's that round hill you sees over there," and Toby pointed to a lonely mountain to the westward.

Charley set forth at a trot. His example, aided by Toby's threatening whip, accelerated the speed of the dogs perceptibly, and the shore began to loom up. But the sky had clouded, and presently a fine mist of snow shut out the Capstan, which was Char-

ley's guide, and at last the entire shore line was clouded from view.

For some time the dogs had persisted in edging toward the right, which was seaward, though Toby held them to their course with the whip. After a little while he called to Charley to come back.

"I'm thinkin' you don't go straight since the snow comes and you can't see the hill," he explained. "I'll be goin' ahead for a bit and you drive."

"All right," agreed Charley. "I can drive the team, and you'll know the way better in the snow."

Still the dogs were obstinate. They at once recognized the change in drivers, and took advantage of Charley's inexperience. Charley used the whip, but he could not handle it as effectively as a driver should, and the dogs gave little heed to it. They insisted upon taking an angle to the right of Toby's trail, and Charley found that he could not straighten them out upon the trail.

In desperation he ran forward to the side of the team, with the whip handle clubbed, to compel obedience. Sampson showed his fangs, and snapped at Charley's legs. This was a signal for open rebellion on the part

of the whole team. They came to a standstill, and faced him, showing their fangs, and one or two of them sprang at him, but were held in leash by their traces.

Toby, looking behind, discovered the situation and came running to Charley's assistance. Taking the whip from Charley he quickly had the mutinous dogs reduced to sullen submission.

"I'll not be goin' ahead of un again," said Toby. "'Tis not helpin' to make they go any. The dogs act wonderful queer. They won't follow like they always has."

Toby urged them forward. They whined and whimpered, and at last some of them lay down, and Toby was compelled to beat them into action.

It was directly after this that they came to open water. The boys looked at each other in consternation.

"What'll we do?" asked Charley.

"I'm not knowin'," confessed Toby. "The ice has gone abroad from the shore, and we're driftin' out to sea."

"Shall we be—lost?" asked Charley in dull terror.

"It may be she's just settled off from shore here," suggested Toby hopefully. "She may

be holdin' fast up the bay above the narrows. We'll try un whatever."

He commanded the dogs to go on. They sprang to the traces, but turned to the right. Against their will, and with free use of the whip, he succeeded in swinging them to the left and up the wind. Reluctantly and slowly they moved. They seemed aware of their danger. They were dissatisfied.

At length Tinker, the leader, squat upon his belly. Toby cracked the whip over him with a command to go on, and he turned upon his back, paws in air, as though in meek appeal. Toby clipped him with the tip of the lash, and he sprang up, turning to the right, and Toby lashed him back into the course to the left. He gave no display of savagery, as did Sampson, but appeared to be beseeching his young master to do something his master could not understand.

The cold had grown intense. The wind had become a stiff gale. The air was filled with a blinding dust of snow, so thick that Tinker, the leader, could scarcely be seen from the komatik. The wind was in their face, and Toby and Charley and the dogs struggled against it as against an unseen wall. The ice was heaving with an under swell.

Now the komatik would be climbing an incline, now dashing down another.

At last the dogs in sullen mutiny rebelled against further action. Tinker squatted upon the ice, and the other dogs followed his example, save Sampson, who faced about at Toby, snarling and showing his fangs. No beating could induce them to move ahead in the direction in which they had been traveling, though they made several attempts to swing about to the right.

XXI

THE CARIBOU HUNT

THE mutinous dogs eyed Toby's whip. They feared the whip, but no fear of it could induce them to advance farther, in the face of the storm, upon the unstable ice.

"What can we do now?" asked Charley in an appealing tone.

"I'm not knowin' what's ailin' the dogs," answered Toby rather uncertainly. "I can't make un go ahead, and we can't bide here, whatever. I'm fearin' with the way the ice heaves she's gone abroad at the narrows. 'Tis no worse to the east'ard than 'tis here, and that's the way the dogs wants to go. I'm thinkin' to let un go that way."

"But that will be going out to sea!" exclaimed Charley in alarm.

"Aye, but the mouth of the bay is quite a bit out past Deer Harbour, and we're a good bit inside Deer Harbour P'int now," Toby explained. "Till we gets beyond the mouth of the bay I'll be hopin' to get ashore.

We'll turn back before we goes too far, unless the ice floats us out."

"Let's get farther from the edge of the ice anyhow," said Charley, as a great heave of the ice under his feet nearly threw him down.

"Aye, 'tis like to break up here any time. We'll let the dogs have their will," agreed Toby, but not hopefully.

With that he commanded the dogs to rise, which they did readily, and breaking the komatik loose he gave them the order to the right, and away they went with a will, and with apparent satisfaction that they had won their way in facing toward the eastward.

Now, with the wind nearly behind them, the animals traveled steadily, and with no urging. It was much less trying, too, for Toby and Charley as well as for the dogs.

"The ice has about stopped its roll," said Charley presently, and with fresh hope. "It's a lot steadier."

"She is that," admitted Toby. "I were just thinkin' that the dogs knows more than we does about un."

And so it proved. Following the ice that bounded the open water along the north shore of the bay, they observed that the

chasm of water separating the ice from the land was narrowing. Presently, to their great joy, the open water came to an abrupt end, with the ice firmly connected with the shore.

"We're just across from the p'int outside Deer Harbour," said Toby. "We can make un to Deer Harbour now, and bide there till the storm passes. We'll be findin the Deer Harbour ice fast, I'm not doubtin'."

"But we'll keep close to shore!" suggested Charley cautiously.

"Aye, we'll do that," agreed Toby. "We'll be takin' no more chances with the ice."

An hour later they again drove up to Skipper Cy Blink's trading store, and received a hearty welcome from the Skipper.

"I'm wonderful glad to see you! Wonderful glad!" greeted the Skipper. "I've been blamin' myself ever since you goes for lettin' you start with the wind the way she were, and fearin' all the time you'd be gettin' caught in a break up."

Skipper Cy Blink made much of the bear that Charley had killed with his new rifle, and admitted that such game would surely have made him forget, quite as readily

as it had the boys, about the danger of the ice going abroad.

"'Twere fine you knocks he over," enthused the Skipper. "I never could have let a white bear pass without *tryin'* to knock he over, whatever. You lads bide here in comfort till the storm passes. 'Twill be a short un. I'm thinkin' 'twill clear in the night, and the wind'll shift nuth'ard before to-morrow marnin', and before to-morrow evenin' the ice'll be fast again on the bay."

And, as Skipper Cy had said, so it came to pass, and on the second morning after their return Toby and Charley turned again toward Pinch-In Tickle and Double Up Cove, with the ice beneath them as firm and solid and safe as ever it was.

How glad the boys were to reach Pinch-In Tickle! There would be no more danger of bad ice to face, and the difficult ballicaders were behind them, a fact that was particularly appreciated by Charley.

They made a rousing fire in the stove, and fried some bear's meat to satisfy a hunger that had been accumulating since they had left Deer Harbour in the morning. Then a fishing net that needed repairs was made ready to lash upon the komatik with the

load in the morning, the dogs were fed, and they settled for a cozy evening while they talked over their adventures, and Charley's new rifle.

"'Tis the finest shootin' rifle I *ever* sees," declared Toby, adding wistfully: "I wishes I had one like she. Maybe with the silver fox Dad'll be lettin' me have un."

"When I get home I'll have my Dad send you one, Toby," Charley promised impulsively. "Don't say a thing to your father about it and I'll send you one and him one too. I'd let you have mine, only it's the first one I ever owned, and I shot the bear with it."

"Charley, you're wonderful kind!" and Toby's face beamed with pleasure. "But," he added seriously, "'twould be too much, Charley. You mustn't send un."

"No it won't be too much," insisted Charley. "I want to do it. It will make me feel happy."

It was late the following afternoon when they reached Double Up Cove. The komatik was laden much more heavily than on the outward journey, and the dogs, perforce, traveled much more slowly.

When they had unloaded the komatik, and

carried the meat and other cargo into the cabin, they brought in the komatik box, but before they unpacked it Mrs. Twig and Violet must needs see Charley's new rifle, and he exhibited it with due pride to be admired with real appreciation.

The komatik box was then opened, and Charley drew forth the shawl and presented it to Mrs. Twig.

"Oh, Charley, lad!" she exclaimed, holding it up. "I been wantin' a shawl all my life and never has un, and this un is a *rare fine* shawl. 'Twere wonderful kind o' you to think o' me and get un!"

Violet was standing wistfully by, and she hugged her mother to show how deeply she shared her mother's pleasure.

In the meantime Charley was delving into the depths of the komatik box, and now he brought forth another package, which he presented to Violet, remarking:

"There's something for you, Violet. I hope you'll like it."

Skipper Blink had packed the doll most carefully in a box, that its dainty dress might not be soiled. In great eagerness of anticipation Violet removed the wrappings one by one. When at last the doll was disclosed, she

gasped for a moment, then caught her breath, and then in a spasm of joy hugged it to her breast with eyes brimming with tears.

"Oh! Oh! Oh! How *pretty!* How *wonder*ful pretty!" she cried in ecstasy. "I *loves* un! I *loves* un! Oh, *Charley!*" and with one arm hugging the doll, she flung the other arm around Charley's neck in unrestrained joy, and kissed his cheek. "Charley, you brings me the first doll I *ever* has in my life!"

It was the most sincere exhibition of appreciation and pleasure Charley had ever witnessed, and the pathos of it made him wink hard to keep back the tears that threatened to come into his own eyes.

In the kindlier land from which he came, where dolls and other toys are lavished upon the children, and they accept them as a matter of course, and soon cast the old ones aside for the new, no such joy as that which Violet experienced is possible. She was at that moment certainly the happiest little girl in all The Labrador, and perhaps in all the world. And for many years to come that doll was to be her most precious possession. No other could ever take its place. She talked to it and loved it as though it were human, and

alive, and to her it was indeed a living thing. She told it all her joys, and went to it for comfort in all her sorrows.

What exclamations of appreciation there were when Toby produced the ancient "sweets" that he had purchased from Skipper Blink! They were as hard and ordinary and stale as ever candies could be, and at home Charley could not have been tempted to taste them. But here even he pronounced them excellent, and to the others they were indeed a rare treat.

Just as Mrs. Twig announced supper one evening a week after the boys had returned from their trip to Deer Harbour and their adventure with the bear and on the ice, the door unexpectedly opened and there stood Skipper Zeb in the lamplight, laughing heartily at the fine surprise he had given them.

Violet ran to him and threw her arms around him, and every one gathered about him in joyful welcome, while he picked ice from his eyelashes and his beard, and chuckled contentedly:

"Well, now! Here we be, safe and sound and snug! Everybody well and happy! 'Tis wonderful fine to be back."

"'Tis wonderful fine to have you back!" Mrs. Twig declared, and everybody echoed the sentiment.

When he had taken his things off, and properly greeted every one, and Toby and Charley had unpacked his toboggan and carried into the house his winter's catch of pelts and his traveling equipment, he turned to Charley.

"Well, now!" said he. "You looks like a Labradorman! And how does you like livin' at Double Up Cove? 'Twere a proper way to get out of that fix you gets in when the mail boat leaves you, I'm thinkin', from the way you looks! Rugged and well! And everybody happy!"

"I've had the best time this winter I ever had in my life," Charley declared.

"Well, now! That's the way to talk! That's the way to make the best of a bad job! 'Twere lookin' like a wonderful bad job you makes of un, and a wonderful bad fix you gets in, when the mail boat goes and leaves you. But you gets out of the fix and makes the best of what you finds and turns trouble into a good time! That's what I calls risin' above trouble," and Skipper Zeb slapped Charley upon the shoulder in hearty

approval. "Now we'll set in and eat. I'm as hungry as a bear, and I could eat a bear if I had un to eat."

"'Twill be bear's meat you'll eat," smiled Mrs. Twig, placing a dish of meat on the table.

"Charley knocks un over, and 'twere a white bear," Toby announced. "And Charley fights a wolf pack, and knocks one of un over with an ax."

As they ate Skipper Zeb heard from Toby the stories of Charley's fight with the wolves and of the shooting of the bear, interrupting the narrative with many delighted exclamations.

"Now I wants wonderful bad to hear how you lads were makin' out to get back to Double Up Cove after you leaves the Black River tilt," said Skipper Zeb. "The wind comes to blow a gale before you has time to get to Swile Island, and I wonders and wonders about un, and I fears you gets in a wonderful bad fix. But they's no way I can be helpin', so I says, 'Tis no use to worry. To-day's to-day and to-morrow's to-morrow, and so I'll trust the Lard and the good sense o' the two lads to get un out o' any fix they gets in.'"

"Were you findin' the oars we caches on Swile Island?" asked Toby.

"Aye, I finds un, but I'm not findin' the boat," nodded Skipper Zeb, a puzzled look on his face. "I'm not knowin' what to think o' that. When I finds the oars this marnin' I says, 'The lads gets to Swile Island, whatever.' But when I'm not findin' fin or feather o' the boat, I'm not knowin' what to think about un. I figgers that they's no chanst to get away from Swile Island with the boat, whatever, with the storm and the high seas that's runnin' for a week or ten days, and I knows you'll be gettin' out o' grub."

Then Toby told him of his own and Charley's experiences, and while he listened admiringly he asked many questions.

"Well, now! With good sense and the Lard's help you pulls out of a wonderful bad fix. You does all you knows how, and then prays the Lard. That's the way! 'Tis no use wastin' time prayin' till you does your best first," and Skipper Zeb nodded his head approvingly. "Well, now!" and leaning back his head he looked at Charley approvingly. "When you shoots a deer I'll be namin' you a Labradorman! 'Tis the proudest name I'm

thinkin' of, and *that* you'll be! There's a fine chance to knock over some deer right handy. I sees fine footin' this evenin'. A big band of deer's workin' down this way, and they're like to come out any time. 'Tis a wonderful big band. Some years they comes and some years they don't. This year they comes."

Skipper Zeb explained to Charley that at this season of the year the snow became so deep in the wooded interior that the caribou, or wild reindeer, had a great deal of digging to do with their hoofs to reach the thick beds of moss which covered the ground beneath the snow, and upon which the animals chiefly fed.

He also explained that each fall the caribou gathered in great bands or herds, and when food became hard to get, they would move or migrate to barren places, where the wind, its force unobstructed by trees, swept the greater part of the snow from the moss covered ground, and thus it was much easier for the animals to reach food. Such a barren was that where the wolf fight had taken place, and where Toby had caught his fox.

"This band, I'm thinkin', is on the barrens to the nuth'ard of the mesh, where you fights

the wolves," said Skipper Zeb. "The footin' goes that way. We'll have a look in the marnin'."

Not a sign of caribou had Toby or Charley seen the whole winter, and Skipper Zeb's statement that a large herd was so near was exciting news. All winter they had been living upon rabbits, partridges and an occasional porcupine. Caribou venison would be a great treat, and the boys were keen for the hunt.

The great event of the evening was reserved until after they had eaten. Then Toby, with much dignity, opened a chest and brought forth the otter and marten skins, and, as a climax, the silver fox pelt. Skipper Zeb was quite overcome. His praise of the boys was unstinted.

"I makes a fine winter's hunt myself," said he, "but nary a silver has *I* ever caught. I has a rare fine catch of martens and minks, and one cross fox, three reds and seven whites, but *I* never catches a silver. 'Tis worth all the fox skins I gets three times over!"

"And now we'll be havin' a wonderful lot o' things we needs," Mrs. Twig smiled happily.

"Aye, *that* we will!" Skipper Zeb boomed heartily. "We can afford un now without stintin'. We'll have un! We'll have nigh to anything we're minded to buy!"

Breakfast the following morning was an exciting meal. The boys could scarce restrain their eagerness to be away to the barrens to look for caribou, and they could talk of nothing else.

"I'm thinkin'," suggested Skipper Zeb, "that if you lads had done a bit of huntin' back over the barrens after you sees the wolves that you'd have found some scatterin' deer there then. Wolves follows deer and kills un to eat, and there's not like to be wolves when there's no deer about."

As soon as breakfast was finished the dogs were harnessed, and day was just breaking when Skipper Zeb and Toby and Charley set forth on their caribou hunt. They had scarcely reached the marsh below the barrens when the dogs began to sniff the air, and to show much eagerness to go forward.

"See un sniff! See un sniff, now!" and Skipper Zeb grinned. "The wind's down from the barrens, and the dogs smells the caribou. We'll find un feedin' there, and there'll be aplenty of un."

At the edge of the barrens the komatik was stopped, and the dogs were secured that they might not interfere with the hunting. Then the three proceeded cautiously, with their rifles ready, over the slope of a knoll, Skipper Zeb in advance. On the summit of the knoll Skipper Zeb halted, and pointed to a moving mass nearly a mile away.

"See un?" said he. "There's hundreds of un! There's not much danger we'll startle they, with the wind nuth'ard. When deer are in big bands they don't startle easy. We'll get all we wants of un."

Gently rising knolls punctuated the barren plateau. Skipper Zeb, leading the way, set forward at an easy but rapid pace. As they approached the feeding herd, he practiced some caution, until at length he stopped, crouching behind a rock, until the boys joined him.

For some time, following depressions between the knolls, the caribou had been hidden from view. Now, peering over the rock, they saw the great herd directly before them. Hundreds upon hundreds of the sleek, graceful animals, spreading over the hills and knolls beyond, were pawing away the hard snow and eating the thick

growth of moss that lay beneath it, with some old bucks strolling among them as sentinels.

"We're in fine shootin' range, and we'll be gettin' all we wants of un," said Skipper Zeb. "Go at un now!"

Charley was so excited that he could hardly hold his rifle, but he aimed and fired. Skipper Zeb and Toby fired at the same time, and the three continued to shoot into the herd until fourteen of the fine antlered beasts lay stretched upon the snow.

"That's enough of un!" directed Skipper Zeb. "'Twill be all we wants, and there'll be enough for Long Tom Ham, too. We'll knock down no more than we can use handy."

With the report of the rifles the animals had begun to move restlessly about. Some of the bucks were snorting, but because the wind was blowing down from the herd toward the hunters, no smell of their enemies reached the caribou. The sound of shooting and even the view of the hunter will often fail to startle a herd, unless they get the smell. But something had happened to some of their number, and the sentinels were on the alert.

Skipper Zeb, with Toby and Charley, stepped out from cover and approached their

victims. Suddenly panic seized the herd. It is probable that in their sudden terror the animals did not see or realize that these were the enemies that had attacked them, but with one accord they started forward. Slowly at first the great herd moved, and then, in an instant, were in a wild stampede.

The three hunters stood directly in the pathway of the fear-blinded animals. On they came, the thousands of hoofs beating upon the frozen snow with an ominous roar like that of a great wind, and smashing everything before them.

"Run! Run! They'll trample us down!" yelled Skipper Zeb.

They turned and ran, but they could not run with half the speed of deer.

XXII

THE STRANGER

ON came the caribou like a brigade of charging cavalry, tramping all before them. Forward they swept in blind panic, as relentlessly destructive as an avalanche, and no more easily stopped or turned aside.

Skipper Zeb and the two boys ran as they had never run before. Once Charley slipped and fell, but was on his feet in an instant. It was an uneven race, and there was no hope of outdistancing the sea of animals in mad flight.

Skipper Zeb knew this, but he hoped to find refuge for himself and the boys behind a boulder large enough to protect them in its lee. Such a boulder caught his eye, and yelling at the boys at the top of his voice, that he might be heard by them above the roar of the pounding hoofs, he directed them to follow him. The foremost caribou were at their heels, when they crouched, breathless with their running, behind the boulder, and

not an instant too soon. Here in safety they watched the herd sweep past them like ocean waves.

Nearly as quickly as the stampede began it ended. The herd swung to the northeast, began to slow its pace, and presently the three hunters saw the rear of the herd in the distance, no longer running, but still moving around restlessly before the animals resumed their morning feeding.

Eight of the carcasses of those they had shot were hauled to the cabin that morning, and while Skipper Zeb busied himself skinning and dressing them, Toby and Charley, in the afternoon, loaded another on the komatik and drove over to Long Tom Ham's at Lucky Bight, and in the evening brought him back with them that he might prepare and take home with him the meat and hides of those that had been reserved for his use; and for this purpose Skipper Zeb loaned him the dogs and komatik.

In that land neighbours are neighbours indeed. They never lose an opportunity to do one another a good turn; and just as Skipper Zeb had thoughtfully shot the animals for Long Tom, and provided the means for Long Tom to take them home, others would,

he knew, if occasion offered, do him a similar kindness.

It was no small job to skin the carcasses and prepare the meat. The sinews were cut from the backs, scraped carefully and hung in the cabin to dry. Later, as she required them, Mrs. Twig would separate them into threads with which to sew moccasins, and boots, and other articles of skin clothing. The tongues were preserved as a delicacy. The livers and hearts were put aside to serve as a variety in diet. The back fat was prized as a substitute for lard. The venison was hung up to freeze and keep sweet for daily consumption.

What a treat that venison was! Charley declared he had never tasted such delicious meat, and he was sure it was much better than beef.

"Well, now!" said Skipper Zeb. "I never in my life tastes beef, and I were thinkin' beef might be better than deer's meat, though I thinks deer's meat is good enough for any man to eat."

Christmas came with plum duff as a special treat, and then the New Year, and with it Skipper Zeb's departure again for his trapping grounds, where he was to remain alone,

tramping silent, lonely trails until the middle of April, then to return before the warming sun softened the snow and in season for the spring seal hunt.

In January the cold increased. With February it became so intense that even the animals kept close to their lairs, venturing out only when hunger drove them forth to seek food.

In January Toby and Charley captured two martens and one red fox, and during February the traps were visited but twice a week, and with no returns. For their pains, they suffered frost-bitten cheeks and noses, which peeled in due time, leaving white patches where the frost burn had been. Then, too, the rabbit snares were sprung and abandoned. There were rabbits and partridges enough hanging frozen in the porch to serve the family needs until spring.

During the cold days of January and February Charley and Toby spent much time in the cabin assisting Mrs. Twig prepare and tan the caribou skins into soft buckskin, or occupied themselves outside at the woodpile with a crosscut saw. The woodpile seemed always to require attention, and though it was a bit tiresome now and again when they

wished to do something more interesting, it supplied excellent exercise.

But they had their share of sport too. On days when there was a fair breeze it was great fun sailing an old sledge over the bay ice. They fitted a mast upon it, and with a boat sail had some rare spins, with occasional spills, which added to the zest of the sport.

Both Charley and Toby enjoyed, perhaps, most of all their excursions with the dogs. When Skipper Zeb returned to his trapping path after his holiday, they took him back, with a load of provisions to Black River tilt. And twice since, on the fortnightly week-end, when they knew he would be there, they drove over and spent the night with him in the tilt, and a jolly time they had on each occasion.

Once on a Saturday the whole family paid a visit to Skipper Tom Ham and his wife at Lucky Bight, spending a Sunday with them. The journey on the komatik was a great treat for both Mrs. Twig and Violet, and this visit supplied food for pleasant conversation during the remainder of the winter.

One day in January Aaron Slade and his wife, neighbours who lived at Long Run,

some forty miles away and to the southward of Pinch-In Tickle, drove into Double Up Cove with dogs and komatik, and spent two whole days with the Twigs. And then, the following week, came David Dyson and his son Joseph, and to all the visitors Toby, with vast pride, exhibited his wonderful silver fox pelt.

"'Tis a fine silver!" exclaimed Aaron, holding it up and shaking out its glossy fur that he might admire its sheen. "'Tis the finest silver ever caught in these parts! You'll be gettin' a fine price for he, Toby."

And so said David Dyson and Joseph, and David, with a wise shake of his head, added:

"Don't be lettin' the traders have un, now, for what they offers first. Make un pay the worth of he."

With these excursions of their own, and the pleasant visits from their neighbours, and with always enough to do, time slipped away quickly, and the middle of March came with its rapidly lengthening days.

"In another month, whatever, Dad'll be comin' home," said Toby one morning when they were at breakfast. "We'll go for he with the dogs and komatik. And then 'twill soon be time for the sealin' and fishin' again."

"'Twill be nice to have fresh fish again," suggested Mrs. Twig. "We're not havin' any but salt fish the whole winter. I'm thinkin' 'twould be fine for you lads to catch some trout. I'm wonderful hungry for trout."

"I can be helpin' too," Violet broke in delightedly.

"'Twill be fine, now," agreed Toby enthusiastically. "We'll catch un to-day."

"How can you catch trout with everything frozen as tight as a drumhead?" asked Charley.

"I'll be showin' you when we gets through breakfast," Toby assured. "We always gets un in winter when we gets hungry for un."

"I'm hungry for trout too," laughed Charley, adding skeptically, "but you'll have to show me, and I'll have to see them before I'll believe we can get them with forty below zero."

"I'll be showin' you," Toby promised.

From a box he selected some heavy fishing line and three hooks. On the shank of the hooks, and just below the eye, was a cone shaped lead weight, moulded upon the shank. Each line was then attached to the end of a short, stiff stick about three feet in length,

which he obtained from the woodpile outside. Then the hooks were attached to the lines, and cutting some pieces of pork rind, Toby announced that the "gear" was ready.

Violet had her things on, and armed with the equipment, the three set out expectantly for the ice, Toby picking up an ax to take with them as he passed through the wood porch.

"Here's where we fishes," said Toby, leading the way to a wide crack in the ice a few feet from shore and following the shore line, caused by the rising and falling of tide.

The crack at the point indicated by Toby was eighteen inches wide. With the ax he cut three holes at intervals of a few feet through a coating of three or four inches of young, or new ice, which had formed upon the ice in the crack. Then, baiting the hooks with pork rind, he gave one of the sticks with line and baited hook to Charley and one to Violet.

"The way you fishes now," he explained to Charley, "you just drops the hook into the water in a hole, and holdin' the stick keeps un movin' up and down kind of slow. When you feels somethin' heavy on the hook heave un out."

"Don't the trout fight after you hook them?" asked Charley. "I always heard they fought to get away, and you had to play them and tire them out before you landed them."

"They never fights in winter, and your fishin' pole is strong enough so she won't be hurt any by heavin' they out soon as you hooks un," grinned Toby. "'Tis too cold to play with un any. Just heave un up on the ice. They don't feel much like sportin' about this weather."

Charley had scarcely dropped his line into the water, when Violet gave a little scream of delight, and cried:

"I gets one! I gets the first un!" and with a mighty yank she flung a three-pound trout clear of the hole.

A few minutes later Charley, no less excited and thrilled, landed one that was even larger than the one Violet had caught, and at the end of half an hour the three had caught forty big fellows, some of which, Charley declared, were "as big as shad."

It was stinging cold, and even with the up and down movement of the line it was often caught fast in the newly forming ice. At intervals of a few minutes it was neces-

sary to use the ax to reopen the holes, and the lines themselves were thickly encrusted by ice.

"'Tis wonderful cold standin' on the ice," said Violet at length. "I has to go in to get warm."

"We're gettin' all the trout we can use for a bit," suggested Toby. "If you wants to go in, Charley, I'll be goin' too."

"I'm ready to quit," Charley admitted. "It's mighty cold standing in one place so long."

"Wait a bit," said Toby. "I'll be gettin' a box to put the trout in, and the old komatik to haul un up to the house. Wait and help me."

Charley busied himself throwing the fish from the three piles into one, while Toby followed Violet to the house, and when he had finished looked out over the bay. Far down the bay he saw something moving over the ice, and in a moment recognized it as an approaching dog team.

"Somebody's coming!" he shouted to Toby. "There's a team of dogs coming up the bay!"

"Who, now, might that be?" puzzled Toby, who ran down to Charley.

"They must be coming here, for we're the last place up the bay," reasoned Charley.

"They's sure comin' here!" said Toby. "I'm thinkin' now she may be a team from the French Post in Eskimo Bay, up south. They comes down north every year about this time to buy fur, though they never comes here before."

"Maybe they heard about your silver fox," suggested Charley, "and they're coming to try to buy it from you. Ask a good price for it. It's a good one."

"Maybe 'tis that now," admitted Toby. "Aaron and David's been telling they about un, and they thinks they'll be comin' and buyin' she. But I'll not sell un. I'll let Dad sell un."

The boys excitedly threw the fish into two boxes that Toby had brought down on the old sledge that they used for sailing, and hastening to the cabin announced the approaching visitors to Mrs. Twig.

She was in a flurry at once. She put the kettle over, and told Violet to set two places at the table, and Toby to clean some trout, and in a jiffy she had a pan of trout on the stove frying.

"There'll be two of un, whatever," she

predicted. "The traders always has a driver."

But as the komatik approached nearer, the boys discovered that there was but one man, and, therefore, Toby was certain it could not be the French trader.

"He'd be havin' a driver, whatever. He never travels without un," Toby asserted. "I'm not knowin' the team. 'Tis sure not the Company[1] team."

"We'll soon know now," said Charley, as the dogs swung in from the bay ice and up the incline toward the cabin.

Toby's dogs had been standing in the background growling ominously as they watched the approach of the strange team. Now, as one dog, they moved to the attack and as the two packs came together there was a mass of snapping, snarling, howling dogs. The stranger with the butt of his whip, Toby with a club that he grabbed from the woodpile, jumped among them and beating them indiscriminately presently succeeded in establishing an armistice between the belligerents, the Twig dogs retiring, and the visitors, persuaded by their master's whip, lying down quietly in harness.

[1] Hudson's Bay Company.

"Is this Double Up Cove, and are you Toby Twig?" asked the stranger through an ice-coated beard, when he was free to speak.

"Aye," admitted Toby, "'tis Double Up Cove, and I'm Toby Twig, sir. Come into the house and get warmed up and have a cup o' tea. 'Tis a wonderful cold day to be cruisin', sir."

"Thank you," said the stranger, shaking hands with Toby and Charley. "It is cold traveling, and I'll come in."

"Charley and I'll be unloadin' your komatik, and puttin' your cargo inside so the dogs won't get at un," suggested Toby. "You'll bide here the night, sir?"

"Yes," said the stranger, "I'll spend the night here."

"Come in and have a cup o' tea, and we'll loose your dogs after, sir," suggested Toby, leading the way to the cabin.

Mrs. Twig, still flurried with the coming of a stranger, met them at the door.

"Come right in, sir. 'Tis wonderful cold outside," she invited.

"Thank you," said the man. "That fish you're frying smells appetizing. My name is Marks. I'm the trader at White Bear

Run. I suppose you're Mrs. Twig and this little maid is your daughter?"

"Aye, sir, I'm Mrs. Twig and this is Vi'let."

"Glad to see you both," and after shaking hands with Mrs. Twig and Violet, Marks the trader from White Bear Run proceeded to remove his adikey, and standing over the stove that the heat might assist him, to remove the mass of ice from his thickly encrusted beard.

"Set in now and have a cup o' tea, sir, and some trout," invited Mrs. Twig when Marks's beard was cleared to his satisfaction.

"Thank you," and Marks took a seat. "Nippy out. Hot tea is warming. Trout good too. Regular feast!"

"The lads and Vi'let just catches the trout this morning."

When he was through eating, Marks donned his adikey, and went out of doors to release his dogs from harness. Toby and Charley had already unlashed his load, and carried his things into the porch where they would be safe from the inquisitive and destroying dogs.

One by one Marks loosed his dogs from

harness, giving each a vicious kick as it was freed, and sending it away howling and whining, until he came to the last one, a big, gray creature. As he approached this animal, it bared its fangs and snarled at him savagely. With the butt of his whip he beat the dog mercilessly. Then slipping the harness from the animal, Marks kicked at it as he had kicked at the others. The dog, apparently expecting the kick, sprang aside, and Marks losing his balance went sprawling in the snow. In an instant the savage beast was upon him.

XXIII

THE LOST FUR

WITH the release of the stranger's dogs Toby had rather anticipated a renewal of hostilities between the packs. To be prepared and armed for such an event he was standing by with his dog whip ready for action.

He had been observing Marks and the dog, and the ill feeling between the two had caused him to expect, sooner or later, some such accident as that which had occurred. The gray dog was bolder than is usual with Eskimo dogs, and Toby had no doubt that it was constantly on the alert for an opening that might permit it to find its cruel master at a disadvantage, when it could attack and destroy him safely.

With these thoughts, Toby was an anxious witness of the inhuman treatment of the dogs by Marks, and when the big wolf dog sprang upon its victim, he intuitively and instantly brought the butt of his whip down upon the dog's head using all the force of his young

arm. This unexpected attack from the rear caused the animal to retreat, but not until it had torn a rent in the man's adikey, and drawn blood from his shoulder, barely missing the neck and throat, which had been its aim.

Marks was in a white rage when he regained his feet, and the dog would have had another merciless beating at his hands, had he been able to approach it, but it wisely kept at a distance, and would not permit itself to be approached.

"That dog's holdin' a grudge against you," remarked Toby. "He'll be gettin' you when you're not mindin' he sometime, and he'll sure kill you if he does. I'd shoot un if 'twere mine."

"No," snapped Marks decisively, "I won't kill him. He won't kill me. I'll keep him and club him till he cringes and crawls at my feet. I'll be his master. No dog can make me kill him because he's bad. I'll take it out of him."

"But that un has a grudge," repeated Toby.

"Just bad! Just bad! Three-quarters wolf! I'll make him a dog and take the wolf out of him."

The wound in Marks's shoulder proved little more than a scratch. Mrs. Twig bathed it with Dr. Healum's Liniment, and Marks assured her it would be all right. Then while Marks smoked, and the boys sat and talked with him, she repaired his torn adikey.

"I'm buying fur," Marks presently suggested. "Aaron Slade told me you have some."

"We has some fur," Toby admitted, "but Dad sells the fur and he's away at his path. He'll not be comin' home till the middle o' April month."

"Too bad, but I'd like to have a look at it. Aaron says you have a silver fox. I'd like to see that."

"I'll get un," said Toby.

While Toby opened the fur chest, and brought forth the cotton bag in which he kept the silver fox pelt, Marks watched him closely. As Toby drew the pelt from the bag and handed it to Marks and the man shook it out and held it up for inspection, Charley detected a gleam in his eye of mingled admiration and greed, and it gave Charley a most uncomfortable feeling.

"I'll give you four hundred cash for it,"

said Marks without taking his eyes from the fur.

"No," Toby declined, "I'm not wantin' to sell un."

"That's a good offer," persisted Marks. "It's about what they'll give you at the post in *trade*. I'll pay *cash*."

"I'll not sell un. I'll keep un till Dad comes home, and let he sell un."

"Four hundred fifty," said Marks, and he drew forth a roll of bills and counted out the money. "There's the cash. Take it. I want this fur. It's a big price."

"I can't take un," Toby declined, unmoved. "I'm not doubtin' 'tis a fair price, but I'll not sell un. The fur's for Dad to sell when he comes home."

"You're a stubborn young fool!" blurted the man in a burst of temper.

"I'm not doubtin' that either," grinned Toby. "I'm a bit stubborn whatever about not sellin' the fur. 'Tis for Dad to sell."

"All right. We'll call you stubborn and not a fool but foolish. That's what I mean to say. You're turning down the best offer you'll ever get for that skin, and your father will say so, and he would want you to sell it if he were here."

The man smiled in an effort to appear agreeable, though Charley thought there was something sinister and unpleasant in the curl of his lips.

"I'll not sell un whatever without Dad's tellin' me to sell un."

At his request Toby displayed to Marks his other pelts.

"I'll pay you twenty-five dollars apiece for your marten skins, and take them as they run," Marks offered. "That's cash I'm offering, not trade."

"I can't sell un," Toby declined. "We owes a debt at the Company shop, and we has to use un to pay the debt. They gives us thirty dollars for un there."

"But that's trade," said Marks. "I offer cash, and twenty-five in cash is more than thirty-five in trade."

"Not for us," objected Toby. "If we takes twenty-five dollars in cash we only buys twenty-five dollars' worth with un. If we trades un in we gets thirty dollars' worth with un, whatever."

"I can't argue with you, I see," and the man appeared to relinquish his effort to buy the fur.

Marks made no further reference to the

pelts, indeed, until after Mrs. Twig and Violet had retired that evening to the inner room and to bed. Then for nearly an hour he sat smoking and telling the boys stories of adventures up and down the coast, until Charley, yawning, suggested that he was sleepy, and saying good night retired to the bunk which he and Toby occupied.

While Toby was spreading a caribou skin upon the floor near the stove as a protection for Marks's sleeping bag, Marks suggested:

"Let me see that silver again. I'd like another look at it."

Toby obligingly brought it forth, and again Marks held it up for inspection.

"I'll give you five hundred and fifty in trade for that, and you can come to my shop at White Bear Run and trade it out any time you like."

"No, I'll not sell un," and there was no doubt that this was Toby's final and decisive decision.

"All right!" and Marks returned the pelt to Toby. "You have an otter there you didn't show me. How about that?"

Toby passed the otter pelt over to Marks, who examined it critically, and finally suggested:

"I'll give you fifty-five dollars in cash for it."

That was a good price. Toby was aware that the best price for otters at the Hudson's Bay Company's shop was fifty dollars in trade, and he could see no reason for refusing to sell it to Marks.

"You can have he," he accepted.

"Glad I can buy something," Marks grinned, counting out the money and handing it to Toby.

"Aye," said Toby, accepting the bills and counting them, "and I'm glad I can sell that un to you, sir."

"Dream pleasant dreams, and let them be about the silver fox," Marks smiled his sinister smile. "If you dream right, you'll dream you took me up on my offer."

"I'll not be dreamin' that, sir, whatever. Good night, and I hopes you'll rest well," and closing the fur chest, Toby joined Charley, who was already asleep.

Marks made no further mention of the silver fox the following morning. Directly breakfast was eaten he packed his sledge, harnessed his dogs, and drove away, and was soon lost in the distance.

It was after sundown that evening, when

Toby and Charley had just fed the dogs, and were about to return to the cabin, when suddenly there appeared out of the silent forest a party of six Indians, each hauling a heavily laden flat sled, or toboggan.

Charley was the first to see them as they emerged in single file from the shadow of the trees into the clearing—tall, swarthy creatures, with straight, coarse black hair reaching to their shoulders, and held in place by red or blue bands of cloth tied around the forehead. They wore hooded buckskin coats, decorated with painted designs. Two of the Indians had the hoods of their coats drawn over their heads, showing them to be of caribou skin with the hairy side out, and with pieces of skin sewn on each side of the hood to represent ears, and which served to lend a savage aspect to the wearer. Some of them wore buckskin leggings, while others wore leggings of bright red cloth reaching from their buckskin moccasins to the knees.

Straight down they came on their snowshoes to Charley and Toby. Fierce and wild they looked to Charley, but Toby stepped out to meet them and to shake the hand of each, greeting them in their own tongue, while they laughed as they returned the

greeting and appeared to be glad to see Toby.

Then they shook hands with Charley, and when he looked into their faces he decided that they were not so savage after all, but human enough, though he could not take his eyes from their strange dress. It spoke of mystery and of the wild life the men lived in the trackless land from which they came.

They unpacked their toboggans, and directed by Toby stowed their belongings in the porch. When everything was stowed, they stood the toboggans on end, leaning them against the house, and followed Toby into the living-room.

Mrs. Twig welcomed the Indians with the cordiality of the frontier, and made a pot of tea for them, which they drank with rare relish until the pot was drained.

Then spoke Amishku [1] who was the leader, or chief, and Toby, who understood their language well, interpreted his words:

"We have been far into the land hunting the caribou, the marten and the fox, and it has been long since we have visited the wigwams of the white man. This is the first tea we have had in many moons. It is good,

[1] The Beaver.

and we are hungry for it. You are our friends."

"Tell un we'll be havin' supper after a bit," said Mrs. Twig, "and then I'll make more tea."

Upon Toby repeating this, the Indians laughed and two of them went to the porch, where their belongings had been left, and presently returned with a quantity of jerked[1] caribou meat, half a dozen caribou tongues smoked and cured after the Indian manner, and six beautifully tanned hides of buckskin, all of which they presented to Mrs. Twig.

"Give the poor men each a stick of your father's tobacco," directed Mrs. Twig, when the Indians had seated themselves upon the floor, with their backs against the wall, after supper.

Toby went to Skipper Zeb's chest, and fetched a plug for each of them. When they saw the tobacco their faces beamed, and every man drew a red stone pipe from his belt, and when they had filled their pipes and were sending up clouds of smoke they began to laugh and joke.

The conversation inevitably turned to the success of the winter's hunt, and the fur they

[1] Dried.

had caught, and Toby went proudly to his chest to produce and exhibit his precious silver fox pelt to the appreciative eyes of the Indians.

He gave an exclamation of horror, and standing up held in his hand the empty bag in which he had kept the pelt. Then he wildly rummaged to the very bottom of the chest, and finally cried out:

"'Tis gone! The silver's gone!"

Madly he looked through the chest again, throwing out every pelt and every article it contained, but the pelt was not there.

XXIV

THE VENGEANCE OF THE PACK

MARKS was well satisfied with his day's work. He had gone to Double Up Cove for the silver fox pelt, and he had it. He also had the otter pelt. He had paid a good price for the otter—more than he would have paid under ordinary circumstances. Still, it would yield him a fair margin of profit.

He and Toby had been alone when the bargain was struck. Mrs. Twig and the little maid had retired and were asleep, and in any case could not have heard the final bargaining or conversation between himself and Toby. He was assured, also, by the lad's heavy breathing, that Charley was asleep. There was no witness. It would be his word against Toby's. He was a trader with an established reputation, Toby was only a boy.

Marks cringed a little when it occurred to him that contracts made with minors were not binding, if the minor's parents or guardians chose not to approve them. But this was Labrador, with no court of justice to which

they might appeal. Possession was the point, and Marks grinned with satisfaction. He had the pelt in his possession.

No doubt, when the silver fox pelt was missed, he would be accused of having stolen it. When they came to him, he would simply claim that he had purchased it from Toby, upon a trade basis, and that the price was five hundred and fifty dollars. He would stand upon this claim. He was prepared to supply them with goods to this extent of value at any time they might choose to come to his shop at White Bear Run and select them. The price he should put on the goods, he assured himself, would be sufficiently high to render the deal a highly profitable one for him.

Marks had no doubt that he could establish a plausible case. He assured himself that he had no intention of stealing the pelt. At most, he had been guilty only of sharp practice. He would pay for it. From the moment that Aaron Slade had told him about it, he had set his heart upon possessing it, and, he told himself, he usually got what he wanted.

"I'm a go-getter," he laughed in self-appreciation.

The sun was climbing in the sky, and the reflection from the great white field of snow covered ice was intense. At this season it is never safe to travel in the north with the eyes unprotected by goggles fitted with smoked or orange-tinted glasses. The penalty for neglect might prove a serious attack of snow-blindness.

Marks felt in a pocket for his goggles. He could not find them. He felt in another pocket, and repeated the search, but they were not to be found. Then he remembered that he had laid them on the shelf beside the clock, at Double Up Cove, at the time he had taken off his adikey the previous day, and he had no recollection of having removed them from the shelf.

It was a risk to proceed without them, but there was a very good reason why he could not safely return to the cabin at Double Up Cove. He felt that it was to his advantage, until the Twigs had become accustomed to the loss of the silver fox skin, to place as many miles as he could between himself and them, and to do it as quickly as possible. Toby was stubborn, and nobody knew what he might do in his first anger upon discovering his loss.

"He might even shoot," he mused. "That other fellow didn't like me, and the two work together. I'll take a chance without glasses, and won't go back for them."

He turned about on the komatik and looked toward the cabin, his guilty conscience prompting him to fear that even now he might be followed. The cabin was still in view, and to his relief he could discover no activity, and nothing to alarm him.

He urged the dogs forward, and did not halt until he had passed Pinch-In Tickle, and early in the afternoon had turned into the next bay to the southward.

Here he found a grove of spruce trees, and with fire-wood at hand he stopped and lighted a fire and put his kettle over to boil for luncheon.

When the fire was burning freely, Marks discovered, upon looking into it, a painful sensation in his eyeballs. The glare of the snow had affected them. Before he finished eating, the pain had developed considerably, and he determined to remain where he was until sunset, when he would proceed to Aaron Slade's cabin, some five miles farther. Here he could spend the night, and could borrow a pair of goggles, he was sure, from

Aaron. If he kept his eyes closed in the meantime, he had no doubt they would be much improved when evening came.

Snapping his long whip over the dogs, he compelled them to lie down. The big gray dog was slow to obey, and Marks laid the lash upon him two or three times to enforce authority.

The dogs quieted, he dropped the whip in the snow at the rear of the komatik, and within reach, and breaking some boughs arranged them to form a comfortable couch near the fire. He then unlashed his sleeping bag from the top of the load on his komatik, spread it upon the boughs and crawled into it.

Marks fell asleep. When he awoke it was nearing sunset, and time to drive on to Aaron Slade's. But he could only open his eyes to a narrow slit, and that for a moment, when they would close. The pain was excruciating. Marks was snowblind.

It was near feeding time, and the dogs were on their feet and restless. If he could get them started, perhaps they would carry him unguided to Slade's. At any rate, he determined to try, for he could not remain where he was.

With much fumbling and groping he succeeded fairly well in securing his load. He felt for his whip, and found it on the snow at the rear of the komatik, where he had dropped it after compelling the dogs to lie down.

The restless dogs had swung around in their traces, and were facing him. Through some mysterious instinct they appeared to have sensed the fact that there was something wrong with Marks. When he ordered them forward, and snapped the whip over them in an effort to straighten them out in the direction in which he wished to go, they replied with snarls, and refused to obey. Their open defiance of his authority sent Marks into a rage. He tried to lash them, but in his blinded condition his aim was poor and his efforts ineffectual.

His anger rose to white heat. If he could not lash them, he could at least beat them into submission, at close quarters, with the clubbed handle of the whip. With a volley of curses, he flew at them blindly, beating right and left, and bringing whines of pain from the unfortunate dogs that he chanced to strike.

Still they did not move into position. In

painful peeps that he had through narrow eye slits he saw the big gray dog facing him and snarling at him with a show of its ugly fangs. That dog was the instigator of the trouble he was having! He hated the creature! He would beat it into submission!

The gray dog was in the center of the pack, and to reach it Marks was compelled to step over the traces of some of the other dogs. One of them, in fear of the whip handle, sprang away as Marks approached, and in the movement wrapped its trace around the man's foot. Marks stooped to disentangle his foot, and as he did the dog swung in another direction in an effort to escape.

This motion jerked the blinded man's feet from under him, and unable to recover his balance, he fell at full length among the dogs.

In a moment the gray dog, followed by the pack, was upon the prostrate and helpless man. The trader's team had suddenly become a snarling, yelping savage pack of wolves.

XXV

AMISHKU AND MAIGEN, THE INDIANS

EVERY one gathered around Toby and the chest. The Indians were no less excited than were Charley and Toby. Again the chest was searched, but with no result, until Charley thrust his hand into the cotton bag in which Toby had kept the missing pelt, and drew forth a piece of paper.

"Here's something!" he exclaimed. "It's a note that man wrote and left."

"Read un! Read un to me, Charley!" Toby asked, and Charley read:

"TO TOBY TWIG:

"I forgot to give you credit slip for the silver fox skin before you went to bed. I may forget to give it to you in the morning, so I will put this in the bag where you will find it. You may use this as a credit memorandum. You may have trade goods from my store at White Bear Run to the value of $550.00 at any time you wish to take the goods.

"JACOB MARKS."

"I didn't trade he the silver!" Toby protested. "I'm not wantin' his goods! I sold he the otter, and told he the silver was for Dad to sell when he comes home from his path!"

"Of course you didn't sell it to him," Charley vouched indignantly. "He's a crook! I knew it right away! He stole it! He's going to try to make out that you sold it to him for five hundred and fifty dollars in trade."

"I wants the silver back," said Toby decisively. "I'll get un, too! Come on, Charley, we'll go for un now."

"All right, Toby, *I'll* help you get it! We'll make that fellow hand it over, if we ever catch him," and Charley meant every word of it.

"What is you lads about?" asked Mrs. Twig anxiously, as Toby and Charley began to change to their traveling moccasins.

"Charley and I'll be gettin' the silver back," said Toby firmly. "Marks'll be gettin' no farther than David Dyson's to-day, whatever, and Charley and I'll be catchin' he by marnin'. If we don't we'll follow he till we does, won't we, now, Charley? We'll be gettin' the silver."

"I'll stick to you, whatever you do," said Charley.

"You lads can't be goin' alone, whatever," objected Mrs. Twig.

"I'm goin' to get that silver!" persisted Toby.

"Don't be hasty, lads. Ask Amishku what he thinks about un," suggested Mrs. Twig. "I'm fearin' to have you lads go."

In his excitement Toby had failed to interpret the note to the Indians, nor had he told them of his purpose of following Marks, and they were looking curiously on without understanding the conversation.

When Toby now told them in their own language the contents of the note which Charley had found in the bag, and of his own and Charley's intention of following Marks and recovering the pelt, and of his mother's objection, the Indians were interested in behalf of their friends. They gathered at once in council. Shortly Amishku turned to Toby, and said:

"You are our friends and you are in trouble. We wish to help you. Your silver fox skin has been stolen, and we will help you find the man that stole it, and get it back for you. We are on our way to the Hudson's

Bay Company's Post at Snow Inlet. At Pinch-In Tickle we must turn north. The man that stole your fur is from White Bear Run. That is south.

"This man left here this morning. He has been traveling all day. We must go now and travel all night if we overtake him soon. I will go with you and my brother Maigen[1] will go with you. You will take my things and my brother's things on your sledge. Our three friends will follow to-morrow and bring their flat sleds with their loads. At Pinch-In Tickle they will wait for us if we are not there before them. We will leave my brother's things and my own things at Pinch-In Tickle and go south until we find the man that stole your fur. Then we will get the fur and come back to Pinch-In Tickle where our friends will be waiting.

"Are you ready? We must go, and we must travel fast, that we may not lose the man's trail."

There was hustle and bustle at once. Toby and Charley brought in the komatik box that Mrs. Twig might pack in it necessary provisions and other equipment. The Indians packed their goods upon the komatik, to-

[1] The Wolf.

gether with the boys' sleeping bags, and Toby and Charley harnessed the dogs.

All of these preparations required but a few minutes, and when they were ready, and as the boys were leaving, Mrs. Twig plead with Toby to prevent the Indians "hurting the poor man," even if he would not surrender the fur.

"I'd shoot he myself," said Toby, "if he wouldn't give un up. I would, I'm that self-willed!"

"Don't be hard on the poor man now," admonished Mrs. Twig as Toby broke the dogs loose and they dashed away in the starlight.

The ice was firm and with few hummocks, and the snow that covered it was frozen nearly as hard as the ice beneath it. The dogs made fast progress, taking a steady trotting gait, with Toby and Charley trotting beside the komatik and the two Indians ahead following the trail of Marks to be certain that it did not turn to some other quarter.

This was an adventure indeed for Charley. He had never before seen Indians other than those exhibited in shows in New York. But these were different. They had never

tasted civilization. They were like the Indians that Natty Bumpo knew, and of which Charley had read in Cooper's tales. He thrilled with the thought that he was traveling with Indians quite as primitive as those which Henry Hudson met when he first sailed up the river that was named after him. These, indeed, he was happy to think, might be the descendants of some of those very Indians, still living the untamed, free life of their primordial ancestors.

It was still dark when the komatik drew up before the cabins at Pinch-In Tickle, now grown familiar to Charley. Here the Indians quickly unloaded the komatik, while Toby and Charley lighted a fire in the stove and put the kettle on to boil; and while Toby fried some fresh caribou steak, the two Indians ran down the trail to assure themselves that Marks had turned to the southward instead of to the northward.

Presently they were back to report that the ice was safe through the tickle, and that Marks had gone, as Toby had expected, southward.

Charley was glad of the opportunity for a short rest, and both boys were hungry. The moment they had eaten, however, the

Indians were on their feet keen for the chase. The sledge was lightly laden now, and the dogs traveled so rapidly that Charley and Toby were able to ride much of the time, though the Indians ran ahead to keep their eye on the trail.

Presently dawn came, and before they turned into the bay to the southward it was full daylight. It was at this time that Amishku, who was some distance in advance, held up his hand and signaled Toby to stop. The two Indians in a moment were lost to view among the boulders that lined the shore, and into which they crept.

"I wonder what's up?" asked Charley, no little excited by the occurrence.

"I'm not knowin'. Maybe 'tis some game they sees. 'Tis not like that Marks would be bidin' hereabouts. He sure went on to Dyson's or Slade's, whatever," answered Toby, no less mystified than was Charley.

Not more than fifteen minutes had passed, though it seemed to the boys much longer, when they saw the Indians returning, and when they joined them at the komatik Amishku held out the silver fox pelt to Toby.

"We got the silver fox skin for our friend, and we are glad," said Amishku, in high

good humour. "The man who stole it will never steal again."

"You—don't mean—you—killed him?" asked Toby, suddenly sorry that he had permitted the Indians to come, and so horrified at the thought that the Indians might have done such a thing for him that he could scarcely speak.

"No," answered Amishku. "His dogs kill him. The dogs are there. The sledge is there. Not much of the man is there."

"The gray dog!" exclaimed Toby.

They drove their team nearer to the scene of the tragedy. A horrible thing met their view, and they quickly turned from it—blood-stained snow, pieces of torn clothing, and other evidences of the tragedy that had taken place.

The gray dog and his mates were still held in leash by their harness, and Toby decided that they should drive on to Aaron Slade's cabin to tell him what had happened and to ask his assistance. And when they reached Aaron's and he had listened to their story, he said:

"I'll drive my team over and take care of un, lads. 'Tis no job for lads like you."

XXVI

THE END OF THE FIX

MARCH, with its sudden blizzards and terrific gales passed. Mid-April came, and Toby and Charley, with dogs and komatik, met Skipper Zeb at Black River tilt, when he appeared again out of the silent wilderness with the harvest of his labours, and his winter's trapping was ended.

How happy they were when Skipper Zeb was home again. It was pleasant to hear his big voice and his jolly laugh booming about the cabin. He was always an optimist, and he always made every one feel that everything was all right.

"Well, now! Here we are all safe and sound and snug! The winter gone, and nothin' to worry about, but a wonderful lot to be thankful to the Lard for!"

The days were long now, and with the coming of May the sun began to assert his strength. The snow softened at midday, and sealskin boots again took the place of buckskin moccasins.

Toby and Charley, with dogs and komatik, hauled wood that Toby had cut in the fall, and more wood that Skipper Zeb felled each day, in preparation for another winter.

"Before we knows un the summer'll be gone and the fishin' over, and Dad'll be settin' up his traps again, and the winter'll come, and I'll not be havin' you, Charley," said Toby sadly.

When there was enough wood cut and hauled to the cabin, and the warm days of June came with their threat of a final break-up of the ice in the bay, Long Tom Ham appeared to take the dogs to Lucky Bight for the summer.

A lump came in Charley's throat when he saw Long Tom Ham drive the dogs away. The going of the dogs marked the end of winter, and the time close at hand when they should close the little cabin at Double Up Cove, where he had spent so many happy months, and depart for Pinch-In Tickle, to await the coming of the mail boat.

But with every wave of regret there followed the happy thought that he would soon be with his father and his mother again, and the thought always sent a tingle of joy up and down his spine. What a meeting that

would be! What a welcome he should receive! What tales he would have to tell! How proud his father would be of him! How his mother would hover over him and love him! As much as he regretted leaving his good friends, these thoughts made the time that he must wait for his going seem all too long.

Near the end of June came a deluge of rain. Miniature rivers poured down the hillsides into the bay, and the world became a sea of slush. When the rain ceased and the sky cleared, the sun shone warm and mellow, and the ice, now broken into pans, began to move out with the tide.

Seals were now basking in the sunshine upon the loosened ice and upon the shore, and for two weeks Skipper Zeb and the boys devoted their time to hunting them. The skins were needed for boots, the flesh for dog food, and the blubber for oil. Sometimes they would themselves eat seal meat, and though the Twigs were fond of it, and Charley had pronounced the meat excellent when he and Toby were starving on Swile Island, he now thought it strong and not as palatable as he would like.

On the last day of June Skipper Zeb's trap

boat, calked and made tight, was launched, and Skipper Zeb announced:

"Well, now! Here we are clear of ice, and I'm thinkin' there'll soon be signs of fish down at the tickle. To-morrow marnin', and the weather holds fine, we'll be cruisin' down. In another week, or fortnight, whatever, the mail boat'll be comin' and blowin' her whistle in the offing. I tells you, Charley lad, when you comes, and when you wants to go home so bad, that when the mail boat comes back and blows her whistle in the offing, we'd be ready and waitin' for she."

And so it came to pass that Charley found himself again with Skipper Zeb and his family in the little cabin at Pinch-In Tickle. How crude it had seemed to him that day when Toby led him up the path, and he had first met Skipper Zeb! How comfortable and hospitable it seemed to him now! How many memories it held for him!

Early one morning there sounded the long blast of a whistle, and presently the mail boat appeared in the tickle, and came to in the offing. There was great excitement in Skipper Zeb's cabin. Charley had no time to change to the clothes in which he had ar-

rived, but they were packed in a neat bundle, and in another bundle were the wolf and bear skins, together with many other souvenirs of the winter. Charley wished to give his rifle to Toby, but Toby declined:

"Keep un yourself to remember the bear, and our other huntin'."

"I'll send you and your father new ones, as I promised, anyhow," Charley assured.

"Well, now, and there's the mail boat!" exclaimed Skipper Zeb. "She's come at last to take Charley away from us! And this is the end of the fix you gets in! I'm wonderful sorry to have you go, lad! We're thinkin' of you like one of the family now, and we're not wishin' to lose you."

"We're all wonderful sorry!" and Mrs. Twig brushed away a tear.

"Some day," said Charley, his heart full, "I'll come back to see you, and perhaps I'll bring Dad with me to show him how good you people are, and how we live in a real wilderness."

"I'll be puttin' you over in the punt to the mail boat," said Toby, reluctant to bid Charley farewell.

They all went down to the landing to see him off, Skipper Zeb, Mrs. Twig and Violet.

He sat in the stern of the punt, as he did on the day Toby took him ashore, while Toby rowed him alongside and helped him on deck with his baggage, and then the boys grasped each other's hands in farewell.

"'Twere the finest winter I ever has—with you here," and Toby's choking voice would permit him to say no more.

"It was the finest winter I ever spent, too," and Charley was little less moved than Toby.

"The ship's movin'. Good-bye!" and Toby hurried down the ladder and into his boat.

Charley stood at the rail watching Toby row his old punt back, until the ship passed into the tickle and shut from view Toby, the rocky hillside, the clinging cabins and Skipper Zeb with Mrs. Twig and Violet at the landing still waving their farewell to him.

"Where you going?" the steward's question met Charley as he turned from the rail.

"To St. Johns. Don't you know me? I'm Charley Norton who came down with you last fall."

It was several minutes before the steward could convince himself that this upstanding, clear-eyed, bronze-skinned fellow, attired

like a Labradorman, was the pale, listless unhappy lad they had lost the previous fall. Then he hastened to Captain Barcus with the news, and Captain Barcus and the whole crew gathered around Charley and welcomed him as they would have welcomed a returned hero, to his great confusion.

"Now a wireless to your father!" beamed Captain Barcus, when Charley had been duly greeted.

* * * * * * *

Mr. Bruce Norton was in his private office on William Street, in New York City, dictating his morning mail, when a boy laid a telegram upon his desk. He finished the letter he was dictating, before opening the message, and then he read:

"Will arrive in St. Johns July twentieth, on mail boat from Labrador. Had a great winter. Killed a wolf and shot a white bear. Wire how you and mother are. Love to you both. Cannot wait to see you.

"CHARLEY."

Mr. Norton was upon his feet before he had read the last line. He stuffed the message into his pocket, seized his hat, and as he bolted from his office he shouted to his secre-

tary, who now filled the place formerly occupied by Mr. Henry Wise:

"Get sleeper reservations for Mrs. Norton and myself to St. Johns at once!"

"For to-day?" asked the secretary.

"Yes! Yes! First train possible!" and Mr. Norton disappeared in an elevator.

When Mr. Norton broke the good news to Mrs. Norton a half hour later, the two declared it was the happiest day of their whole life. But when, a week later, they greeted Charley in St. Johns when he disembarked from the mail boat, and he threw his arms around his mother, perhaps a greater height of happiness was reached.

Before they left St. Johns, Mr. Norton contracted for the best motor boat that he could buy, to be shipped on the mail boat to Skipper Zeb; and with it went a host of gifts to Mrs. Twig and Violet from Mrs. Norton, and new rifles and ammunition to Skipper Zeb and Toby as gifts from Charley.

And we may be sure that the friendship did not end with this. But our story has already grown too long, and those happenings of after years belong to another tale.

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